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The Innocents ON THE BROADS.

BY
ERNEST R.
SUTCLIFFE



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THE INNOCENTS ON THE BROADS

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“ADOWNE, ADOWNE, MY MERRY MAYD.”—p. 64.

THE INNOCENTS ON THE BROADS

BY
ERNEST R. SUFFLING

*Author of "The Land of the Broad's," "Afloat in a Gipsy Van,"
"How to Organize a Cruise," "History and Legends of the Broad's,"
"Fethou, or Crusoe Life in the Channel Isles,"
"The Story Hunter," "The Decameron of a Hypnotist," etc., etc.*

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INTRODUCTION.

DEARLY as Britons may love their country as a whole, they may yet have a greater love for the particular county of their birth, and doubtless in most cases prefer individuals emanating from and incidents appertaining to that particular county.

We may even go farther and assert that a certain district—the district of their birth—claims such a share of their love, that not even many years spent in a far more beautiful locality can alienate the charms of their early haunts.

Is there any wonder, then, that the writer looks upon "Broadland," his native district, as the Bostonians do their city when they call it the "hub of the Universe?" "Broadland" may not be the precise, mathematical centre of the world, yet in a very great measure it has become the centre of amusement, to which many thousands annually turn for a bright, happy, healthy holiday, such as probably few other districts in the British Isles can afford.

Who says, "Cock-a-doodle-do!" to this eulogy upon the "Lazy Lagoons?"

Not the man who has been there certainly, for he knows from experience that there is more fun to be obtained there to the square foot, square acre, or square party, than any other locality he has ever selected for a holiday. The experience of nearly forty years, on the land and on the water of the district, cannot have failed to give the writer many happy hours (we say nothing of the moments of purgatory spent in tight corners, nor of mishaps on many occasions), and to have brought before him many amusing incidents worthy of record.

He therefore begs to lay these yarns before his indulgent readers in the hope of giving them a little innocent amusement, as a salt wherewith to flavour the dull round of everyday, workaday, grindaway life.

ERNEST R. SUFFLING.

The Innocents on the Broads.

CHAPTER I.

"SPRIGGLES."

DEARLY beloved reader, it is not the writer's purpose to weary you with personal yarns or with wonderful "small-corn" deeds he has performed during his varied experiences of Broadand, but he will ask to be allowed to recount his first remembrances of his homeland in *propria personæ*, after which, although he may write many things about himself (for and against), yet it shall be under an assumed cognomen. Hey presto! he will wave his magic stylus, and lo! he will disappear in nubibus; and being in cloudland will be invisible only; the brilliant flashes from his pen piercing his surrounding clouds and reaching the kindly, twinkling eyes of his very indulgent readers.

Before the said gossamer cloud conceals his manly form from view, allow him to say a few words as to his very earliest remembrances of the "ole Broads," as

they are locally called, and this he must do under a *thin* cloud, for looking backward forty years does make things appear a bit hazy.

Spriggles and the Pig.

Spriggles (John Spriggles was the full name bestowed on the writer by the chief carpenter of the now defunct Great Eastern steam-ship, then in the height of its fame) was nearly six years of age when he first made the acquaintance of the Broads, or rather of *a* broad, and that introduction was made with Spriggles ensconced in a sack.

It was a bitter winter, that of 1860-61, and snow-storm after snow-storm had almost obliterated the physical face of the country, when one day Spriggles' uncle signified his intention of driving to Barton—if he could get there—to sell a couple of pigs.

Spriggles was around, and although the snow was up to his little stern, and his naked legs from ankle to knee were as red as two carrots, he wanted "to go wiv uncle."

"Nonsense, youngker, you'd be frooze to dade. Just yow look here, I'm even a-goin' to put these here pigs inter sacks to keep Jack Frost from nipping 'em."

So saying he placed a goodly bundle of straw into each sack, holding them wide open at the mouth, while another man quickly slipped the pigs in and deftly secured the sacks with a piece of spun-yarn.

Spriggles witnessed the operation with open mouth, and then darting into the barn as quickly as his two carrots would carry him, asked that he too might be "sacked up" and put into the bottom of the cart with his playmates.

Of course his request was refused, and equally of course he made "pandemonium" to such an extent that he carried the day, and was duly "sacked up" like the other little squallers.

Plenty of straw was placed in the boke of the cart, and the three sacks hoisted in (Spriggles with his head free), and the whole comfortably covered with a plentiful supply of straw.

Alas! for the good man—the uncle. He had taken a regular Jonah aboard!

Spriggles found a loose sewing twine in the side of his sack, and pulling it about soon succeeded in unripping the side of his receptacle and freeing his hands from their sackcloth environments.

That was all right; it only concerned Spriggles himself.

But then, "*Someone* finds some mischief for idle hands to do," and Spriggles' hands being free, he must needs ascertain how his companions in bondage were progressing.

There were holes in the little pigs' sacks, and Spriggles' fingers were soon into them and tickling his friends' noses "to make them talk," as he afterwards explained.

By-and-by, two holes, by the giving way of intervening threads, were made into one, and by steady manipulation adjacent and subsidiary holes were included in the gap, until Master Pig's head, with its beautiful seraphic smile, popped through.

Having its head free, piggy, aided by good Master Spriggles, gradually worked his dainty little trotters through the aperture, much to the delight of the urchin.

Then Spriggles patted and cuddled his friend—he was always and still is very fond of pork (roast)—and kicking clear his hind legs from the sack, piggy was suddenly emancipated.

At this time the sky was black and dense with snow-clouds, and for some time had been showering down the beautiful and fleecy flakes, and was now falling so rapidly that every object at a dozen yards distance was completely blotted out. An Egyptian darkness covered everything; and just as the gloom was greatest there was a scream and a squeak, a clatter of little hoofs on the tail-board, and—one of the pigs had deserted.

How sweet his uncle looked at that critical moment! Spriggles remembers well, and can still recall to mind the sound and feel of his whip-stock as it fell with beautiful rhythmic cadence, sometimes on the sack, and sometimes on his own little carcase. The music of the baton de cheval was harmonious; bass when it fell on the straw-stuffed sack, and treble when it met the flesh. The other little porker threw in his alto part capitally, while uncle preserved the even *tenor* of his beat.

The other man who was in the cart did nothing except say funny things to himself, which I have since surmised from the exigencies of the case must have been profane; anyhow it acted as a kind of obligato to the general concert, which came to a sudden cessation by the horse moving on suddenly—a procedure which saved both my uncle and the man the trouble of alighting by the iron step (which was no doubt slippery), for they made a short cut of it over the tail-board. Neither was hurt, for the snow was very deep, but when they arose and shook the white flakes from their great coats, they certainly were not at all polite to each other, and used very unparliamentary language, each accusing the other of causing the disaster by not looking after the horse.

Spriggles kept "squat."

I can see them now in my mind's eye. Both were bundled up in much underclothing, over which their top coats were drawn (probably with the help of a shoe-horn), the collars being turned up round their red muffler-swathed necks. The big horn buttons looked ready to fly off the distended coats, so great was the pressure within, both of clothing and turbulent spirits. One flourished a whip and the other a four-foot ground ash, and each looked purple in the face as he stood up to his knees in the snow, saying naughty words, and dimming each other's character.

Spriggles, like the then unwritten "Brer Rabbit," lay low, and for the time, amid the surrounding gloom, was forgotten.

The gentle Spriggles will never forget that pig hunt, for it lasted two mortal hours.

Men were dug out from neighbouring cottages to come and enjoy the pleasures of the chase, and to track the little footsteps of the wanderer through the deepening snow.

But all to no purpose; the falling snow completely hid every track and sign of piggy. Not even a grunt broke the stillness of the snow-laden air.

Had he fallen into a hole? Had he burrowed into a deek? Had he done this or had he done that? Such were the unanswerable questions thrown out by the gallant huntsmen; but nothing came of them, and the hunt was abandoned, or rather the hardy hunters adjourned to an inn, half a mile up the road.

Spriggles adjourned too, and with the rest partook of hot spiced ale out of what appeared to him in those early days a bushel measure, which his shaking little beetroot hands failed to convey to his lips unaided.

The tale of the hunt was told, and the landlord, to aid in the chase, lent his two dogs and himself, and between them the pig was discovered in a covered drain, which ran under the earth, in front of a gateway which gave access to some common land.

The ditch was frozen, and covered with snow on each side of the drain or culvert, but in the interior the water was only partly frozen—a mixture of ice and water.

The dogs discovered the porker and went in after him, but although piggy yelled enough to spoil his voice

he would not come out, neither could the dogs make him.

The quarry was found, but how to secure it, that was the question?

At last a man fetched his old firelock from his cottage, and a pipe-bowl of powder being rammed home, the gun was discharged up the spout, or rather into the culvert.

That did it: Mr. Pig emerged from the other end, not with a rush, but slowly and staggeringly, for his feet were so benumbed that he could hardly stand, and that was why the dogs had failed to dislodge him, although his ears hung in tatters.

Oh! Spriggles, what a morning's work was that!

The pig and the young gentleman just named were restored to their respective sacks, and Barton was eventually reached.

Spriggles was forgiven, and uncle would therefore show him the Broad. And what Spriggles saw as he sat up in his sack was this.

A great level expanse of black ice, covered in some parts with drifts of snow, and in others fanned as clear by the wind as if it had been carefully swept. How far the sea of ice extended could not be discovered, because the sky was so filled with snow-clouds as to give but little light, and what little light there was, was swallowed by the haze which overspread everything, subduing every sound, and making the silence absolute and painful. Three or four hundred yards was the utmost boundary of sight; beyond, all was mystery—a

mystery as impenetrable to the young mind as is the firmament surrounding the earth to the mind of the savant. It appeared a frozen ocean.

On either hand great rands of yellow reed swayed almost imperceptibly in the nearly stagnant air, the purple flossy heads puffing, some hither, some thither, as an icy flaw caught them faintly.

At the edge, where the staithe joined the broad, the ice had been broken, and lay in great hummocks and cakes, piled in miniature castles and forts by the village children now in scholastic incarceration.

A flight of ducks in V form came silently out of the gloom, and flew so close that the noisy movement of their wings broke the stillness of the frozen lagoon, and their startled utterance gave quite a liveliness; but only for a few seconds; then all was still again, except for the crunching footfalls of someone approaching through the deep snow.

Then while John Spriggles was staring into obscurity, and thinking what a queer place a "Broad" was, he became suddenly aware of the presence of a man dressed in a strange costume, which consisted of a sack having holes through which the wearer's head and arms were stuck, and which garment was bound round the waist by several strands of spun-yarn.

The legs of the funny man were also encased in pieces of sacking, likewise deftly fastened with spun-yarn, arranged in the style one sees of cross-gartering used by the Italian and Spanish peasants.

A thick wrap was round the neck of the figure, and a shapeless "billy-cock" on his head completed a very curious costume. In his right hand he held a gun, just as tall as himself, and round his waist, depending from his spun-yarn belt, dangled a half-score ducks, a powder horn, a shot-flask, and a pair of dannocks. He was indeed a curious object, and Spriggles' eyes roved him over from top to toe, even noticing that his thick leather "dannocks" were fingerless, and suspended round his neck by the inevitable lanyard of spun-yarn, so that they could be slipped off at any moment, for the shooter to have free handling of his weapon. When on his huge paws their chief use appeared to be for wiping his nose, whose point was continually furnished with a glistening dewdrop, which, had it not been frequently removed, would quickly have consolidated into a substantial icicle.

And that nose! and those eyebrows! They made Spriggles stare again.

The eyebrows were shaggy masses of dark fuzzy hair (miniature haystacks), on which the frost was sparkling in the keen, biting air, while the nose was the largest Spriggles had ever seen—it was enormous, and towards the tip, of a beautiful violet-blue colour, with a kind of bloom upon it. Spriggles fixed his eyes upon that nose in wonder, not unmixed with awe.

Then uncle and the stranger entered an inn, probably to thaw the stranger's frost-bitten proboscis; for when the former came and fetched Spriggles from his sack, the duck-shooter sat in the bar holding a big measure

of hot ale just under his nose. The boy sat spell-bound, gazing on that wonderful and fearful nose, watching its change of colour, just as a man watches the tints on a piece of steel he is tempering.

Gradually the bloom vanished, then the purple turned blue, only to be succeeded by a red purple, a ruby, and finally settled down to what must have been its normal tint—a full crushed strawberry colour.

Then Spriggles was popped into his straw-sack, a couple of brace of wild duck flung into the cart by his side, and still thinking of that wonderful nose he was soon in the land of dreams.

Spriggles visits Hickling Broad.

Naturally, when summer came smiling along, with its flowers and its balmy, breezy days, Spriggles wanted to see a broad in its best dress, and his uncle, good man that he was, was willing to oblige him.

The day came in July when a load of reed had to be fetched from Hickling, as house thatching was just then brisk; a month later every wagon would be required in the harvest field.

Spriggles was delighted as he took his place in the great wagon, which went off at a slow rate, drawn by two fine strong horses. Clear of the village the horses were put to the trot, and this Spriggles enjoyed even more, for the violent jolting of the wagon created such a dreadful noise that no one attempted to speak.

Spriggles clung to his seat—a piece of inch plank reaching from side to side of the wagon—his teeth rattling in his head as the great broad, iron-tyred wheels crushed over stones and little inequalities in the road; he and the two men shook and trembled from top to toe like jelly-fish as they whirled along, leaving a great cloud of dust flying behind them in the brilliant sunshine.

Spriggles on his springy seat looked like a blob of blanc-mange held in the spoon of a man suffering from palsy; and he thoroughly enjoyed it. The more his teeth rattled and his body shook like the aforesaid dab of “wibbly-wobbly,” the more he was delighted.

So in due time the seven or eight miles were covered, and Hickling was reached.

Spriggles, with a face like the surrounding poppies, was left on the edge of a marsh running down to the broad, with particular injunctions to look after the frail-basket containing dinner for the three—uncle, nephew, and man—which, together with a half-gallon bottle of home-brewed, were placed in a small reed-boat, and covered with some loose sedge or gladdon. Then the boat was drawn ashore, and Spriggles left to amuse himself, while the wagon was taken to fetch the reed, which was a mile further across the marsh.

Spriggles had come armed for the finny fray. His armament consisted of a short clothes prop, a length of whip-cord, and a fair-sized hook.

Besides these he had a little tin box stuffed with half a dozen fat, lazy lobworms.

Spriggles would essay the angle.

But success did not crown his efforts so quickly as he expected—trade was dull—he did not even get a bite—not even from the basket which was strictly “taboo.”

Spriggles grew restless, and tired of his occupation looked around, not for mischief, but merely for something to do to keep him from ennui.

Ha! ha! He wondered if the boat would float if he could push it off. It looked so nice as it lay on the verdant shore fifty yards away, its well-tarred sides glittering in the sun.

Why not try?

He would cast in his hook and bait once more, and then go and investigate the little reed-boat.

Sw-a-ack! Out flew the hook baited with a large worm weighing something under a quarter of a pound, followed by several yards of whip-cord. The end of the prop or rod was firmly thrust into the yielding soil of the oozy marsh, and off ran Spriggles.

The boat was small, but so was the boy; but what he lacked in strength he made up for in perseverance, and at length, after pushing and pulling, puffing and blowing, the boat actually floated.

Hurrah! now for some fun, thought Spriggles, but before he could scramble into the bobbing boat he noticed that his rod had become uneasy at his absence, and was dancing and bowing in a very curious manner.

Off bounced the boy, his face aglow with excitement, for hitherto he had never caught a fish more than say

four inches in length, and this to judge by the gambols of the upright rod must be a large one.

Spriggles seized the wand, and knowing nothing of playing a fish, proceeded to jerk it from its element by the usual process of a mighty overhead swish, calculated either to rend asunder the jaws of the captive or land him on the green sward twenty yards behind his captor.

But Spriggles reckoned without his guest ; he could not at first withdraw his line, for there was something very heavy struggling on it. Presently, by perseverance, he got it nearer the edge and into shallow water, and then he became alarmed, for whatever it was appeared too formidable for such a little fellow to tackle.

It might be some water-dragon—who could tell? What if it were the great wiggle-waggle himself? Should he drop the rod and run?

No, he would see what it was first.

But before seeing what his capture might be, he became suddenly aware that instead of standing on terra firma, he was in about six inches of nice fat, black oozy mud, which was gently gliding over his boot tops and trickling among his toes.

Thoughts of a certain little ash-plant much smaller than the one in his hand came into his head, but still he manfully held to his prize.

Well, after a time, by executing a masterly retreat, he drew the fish from the water, an eel over three feet in length—a veritable, hairy-backed “whopper.”

At first he looked at the monster in dismay, fearing that like the dragon of old it might devour him; but like the good knight St. George his courage was high, and he resolved to slay this Hickling Dragon.

Stalking it in a crouching position, and bringing the rod down on its slimy carcase with all his little might, he would fly back from it as if it were about to attack him, and then renew the assault, until at length the monster eel gave in, and laid out straight as a sign that it was vanquished.

Spriggles was more than delighted; he was in ecstasies as he dragged his resistless victim to the boat, in which he placed it.

But oh! those boots and those knickerbockers! What would uncle say—and do?

At the terrible mess of mud he began to howl with consternation—just quietly to himself.

How could he get it off? Wet grass!

So he polished, and howled, and dipped grass in the water and tried to put matters straight, but it was of no use. What came off his boots in the way of mud and blacking, was only transferred to his hands and face, so that in a few moments his own grandmother would not have known him.

A bright idea: why not sit on the prow of the boat and dangle his dirty boots in the water, that would clean them. In he jumped, and quite enjoyed the give-and-take motion of the light boat as it responded to every motion of his body, as he sat straddle-legs over the prow.

He had nearly removed the whole of the mud from his boots, and was doing capitally, when he happened to look up, and saw a pretty green island of reeds and boulders not fifty yards ahead.

“How did that come there? do islands float?” he mentally asked himself. But before the question was even mentally answered he looked round, and—oh horror! he was a hundred yards from the shore.

He gingerly removed himself from the stem and sat down upon the floor of the boat trembling with fear.

He was afloat now with a vengeance—but no oars. He shouted and he cried, but all was vain. Hunger and the adventures of the day at length completely exhausted the little fellow, and he knew no more till he awoke a couple of hours after.

Could he believe his senses: his boat appeared to be going ahead very quickly, for he could hear the water surge against the bows and run gurgling away under the stern.

He peeped over the gunnel, and there beheld a gigantic man in a tanned slop and fustian trousers, who stood up in another boat which he propelled with one hand, with a quant, at a tremendous rate. He would probably have used two only one had been amputated some years before.

Spriggles had never travelled so fast in his life before, but when Charon is about seven feet high the Styx must necessarily be navigated at a great pace.

He was going to his doom—the ash-plant of his uncle.

Charon caught sight of Spriggles' face just then, and with a semblance of harshness in his voice said :

"Well, blame my carkridge! yow're a pritty lookin' mawkin, an' no mistake. Keep yow squat, or I shell ha' to dangle yow over the starn to get some of the muck off yer face else yer uncle 'ont know yer."

Poor Spriggles was terrified, both by the man and what he expected was in store for him when he met his dinnerless uncle ; for it may be remembered the frail-basket containing the day's food was left in his charge, and was still in the boat.

Charon proved kind on landing, and producing an old handkerchief from his locker, so beautified the boy that he made him quite presentable.

With great misgivings Spriggles followed gigantic Charon towards the Pleasure-Boat Inn, expecting a warm reception, but what was his surprise to find his uncle sitting balanced on the top of a two-gallon bottle on the pathway opposite the Inn, while a crowd stood around trying to make him laugh, or in other way lose his balance.

It was an old custom that when a man had had a glass and was not supposed to be able to control his movements, to wager him a certain amount that he could not place a two-gallon jar down in any convenient spot, mouth upward, lay a short piece of board over it, and then sit on it and balance himself with both *feet off the ground* for the space of one minute.

This little game probably saved Spriggles' skin, for his uncle won his wager and was accordingly in a good

temper. Spriggles, after a good meal, was hoisted on top of the huge load of reed by means of a cart-rope, and having fastened his feet to the binding rope by means of a piece of spun-yarn, as requested, was soon in the land of nod, soothed by his day's exertions and the monotonous rumble of the heavily laden wagon homeward returning.

* * * * *

The mountains of childhood have a knack of becoming very insignificant hills in manhood, and it is not surprising to find the seven-foot Charon of childhood a man of five feet ten inches in after years.

But that eel—well, unlike Charon it has not diminished in size, for it was weighed at the time and scaled nearly five pounds, and what is more, Spriggles has never caught a larger eel in forty years' angling.

Now Spriggles disappears (in nubibus only) and will trouble the reader no more with his mild personal reminiscences.

CHAPTER II.

FLOTSAM ; OR, THE EVANESCENCE OF WEALTH.

EVEN in the quietest villages there is sure to be, now and again, some occurrence which for the time being will cause things to become quite lively, and such an incident occurred some years ago at H——, which shall be related under the above heading.

There were only three characters in the little drama, and though the occurrence was a simple one, those who took part in it may yet have one more laugh over it, for they still live.

Jerry C—— was an amphibious son of the soil (as an Irishman might put it), his life was partly that of an agricultural labourer, and partly that of a fisherman in the North Sea fleet, which, as everyone knows, puts to sea in September and fishes till near Christmas, when it “makes up,” that is, returns to harbour, and is dismantled for the winter, her crew receiving their dole of the profits.

It was late October, and Jerry was invalided home (fishing was bad that year) with an injury to his right hand, which accounts for his presence in his native village in the autumn.

Tom H—— was a blacksmith, at home all the year round, and day in, day out, he banged hot iron on his anvil, and as the aforesaid Irishman might remark, “he made his bread with the sweat of his brow.” Tom was a good fellow—nothing wrong or mean with Tom.

The third to complete the trio of *dramatis personæ* was a little black-bearded coastguard, whom we will call “Dicky Dido,” because that was not his name.

Now it so happened that Tom had been at work at W——, a neighbouring village, and the weather being fine, Jerry had promised to stroll over in the evening, and walk back with him after a glass of ale and pipe at the Sultry Sailor.

Now ten o’clock is village time for closing the inn, or as it is more commonly termed, “turning out time,” and at that hour, therefore, Tom and Jerry stepped out into the blackness of night—a blackness caused partly from their eyes coming from the accustomed light of the cosy tap into the unlit roadway, and partly because the night was both moonless and starless, and great masses of cloud proclaimed rain at hand.

They stumbled and staggered down to the gap-way and on to the beach, as labouring men have a knack of doing, “swidges” and mud being no deterrent to their thickly shod feet.

It was a mild night, and they rolled along the beach right down to the edge of the sea, the walking there was better, the sand being firmer; and as they walked

and chatted, with an occasional bump against each other, they kept their eyes lifting seaward—a habit born in coast villagers—because they sometimes “see things.”

All kinds of flotsam and jetsam is heaved upon this Eastern shore, and men know that the unexpected often happens, and keep an eye for the said “things” accordingly. To wander along the shore at all times and tides with a Micawber eye to what may turn up, is locally known as “pawking,” and the wanderers as “pawkers.”

What precisely to look for they have not the faintest notion. “Things” may be telegraph posts or oranges, dead pigs or candles, hencoops or dead men, Russian tallow or figs, sailcloth or coals, maimed and drowned cattle, frost-killed congers or broomsticks already tied in convenient bundles for carrying on one’s shoulder, or many other curious things that would scarcely be believed were they mentioned.

So Tom and Jerry kept their eyes lifting, and by a lucky chance their vigilance was rewarded.

“What’s that, Tom?” said Jerry, clutching his companion’s shoulder and pointing with unsteady hand to something just discernible among the breakers. “Jest thar, look!”

Tom presently saw it, and with gaping mouth looked intently at it and presently remarked:

“It’s suffin’, Jerry, sure ’nuff. ’Tain’t a ped and ’tain’t a fish trunk. Too big for thet.”

“Looks to me like an ole bullock bing, but jest you watch, it’s got a leed on,” rejoined his comrade.

So they watched, and made it out to be a large box or case, but they were very doubtful, as it was only when the object was among the white broken water that they could see it at all. The darkness of the night made all other parts of the sea obscure, but the luminosity which usually accompanies "white water" or foam, rendered the object visible at uncertain intervals as it heaved and bobbed around in the sea, which broke on the outer bank, a hundred yards out.

Between this bank and the shore lay a broad "low" or inner line of water, fairly smooth, but very deep and dangerous to wade through, because of the deep holes in it scoured out by the run of the tide.

As the tide was now nearly full, the last of the flood running, the "low" was probably seven or eight feet deep, so what was to be done? A lake lay between the men and their prize.

"It don't fare to me to come no nigher, Tom, du it to yew?"

"No, ter on'y seem ter keep a-bobbin' about in that ther driftway."

They agreed therefore to wait a little and see what happened, but after half an hour the "thing" still remained at the same place, bobbing and rolling about just where the waves broke.

"Well?" said Tom, interrogatively.

"May be suthin' worth havin'. I can't swim; do yow strip and go in arter it, Jerry; I'll help yer as fer as my waist, and we'll go snacks in it, eh?"

Jerry remarked, "The water's freezin' cold, and I hain't got the proper use o' my right flipper, and maybe it's only some ole empty box arter all."

"Empty box be blowed! If it was it wouldn't stick thare bowin' and clapper-clawin' at us in that one spot all this time. Go it, Jerry; in arter it, bor, and I'll help yer ashore. Seems to me it's anchored or caught onter suthin', 'relse it would ha' bin ashore afore this."

"P'r'aps it's a mazin' big danto off some man-o'-war, or a square Trinity buoy," said Jerry, as he peeled off his smock and guernsey preparatory to taking the icy water.

At last he was ready, and stood crouched in the cold air. "Hare go then, Tom, but blest if I like it."

Then in he waded, making remarks profane and otherwise, and in a few minutes had battled his way to the outer bank, upon which he landed and stood shivering in about three feet of swirling black water, feeling very shuddery and uncomfortable.

Then wading to the prize, and carefully approaching it, for it was bumping about in all directions, he laid his hand upon it. It was a big deal case about three feet square, but although he obtained a firm grip of it, he could not move it very readily, for although it floated, there was evidently something attached which anchored it effectually.

He gradually waded right round it, sometimes in three feet of water, and sometimes out of his depth, and as he progressed he carefully felt all round with his feet, to ascertain what held his lawful prize—for possession and

a *still tongue* constitutes legal right in the pawker's eyes.

He was not long in discovering what held the case in position ; it was a two and a half inch rope, of which one end was fastened securely round the case, while the other went trending away under the inky sea, where it was probably held by sunken wreckage or a tangled mass of weed.

Jerry's knife was ashore, so he could not cut the rope ; he must try and untie it, but although he laboured at the swollen and stiffened rope till his fingers bled and his shins were chipped and blackened by the case tumbling against them, his labour was in vain ; he could not start the knot.

What Jerry said at this juncture need not be written, for these East coast men use some very choice expressions when they are excited or irritated, which lose half their vigour and blood-curdling properties when embalmed in printer's ink. Enough that Jerry's lower jaw shook so with cold that he did not even understand his own remarks.

Jerry swam ashore and made some more remarks about Tom's inability to swim, and after sprinting up and down the firm sand for a few minutes, to restore circulation, he again plunged into the icy tide, landing near the case.

Jerry stealthily approached the case, which appeared pleased to see him, for it advanced in a friendly way to meet him, and in its hurry took the poor man in the pit

of the stomach with one of its corners, and made him groan again.

But Jerry was not wholly daunted, he rushed once more to the attack, and sawed and sawed away on the salted rope till, with the help of a breaking sea, the last strands gave way and he and the case rolled shorewards together.

Now Jerry stood on the edge of the Nigerian pool—the “low”—and gave a low hist! to attract his mate.

“Where are you?” said Tom in a low voice, for pawking and poaching are both akin, not being looked on kindly by the powers that be.

“Here am I!” came from the beach, “I’m a-comin’ in arter yer. Oh! jumpin’ spikes, ain’t the water cold? Here am I, bor, more Ostend ways—a bit more North, mate.”

Tom came in manfully, almost up to his armpits, the cold water causing him to open his mouth like a round O, and arch his eyebrows like a hedgehog’s back. He stretched forth his hand to get a hold of the case, which floated lightly enough, so much so that there was no need for him to have waded in at all, only that by so doing he put himself on a par with Jerry in the adventure, and expected to share equally with him in the prize.

Oh! Eugh!! Hel’lup! Boof! and a great splashing, and there was Tom out of his depth in a big caldron hole with seven feet of water under him.

He could not swim a stroke, so Jerry made a grab at him, and Tom immediately clutched his comrade round

the neck, and down they went together, fighting and battling for dear life.

Just then came a hail from the blackness of the cliff-shrouded beach.

"Hello there! Who's that? What's amiss?"

The only response was a series of peculiar cries from the struggling men.

The hailer was the little black-bearded coastguard mentioned as the third character in the drama, and he, seeing something amiss, without another thought plunged into the black swirling washway, and swam to the struggling men.

When he reached them, Jerry had fished Tom out of the hole, and was wading ashore with him in a very bad plight; for in his struggles Tom, a powerful fellow, had almost drowned both himself and friend in his wild scramble to reach the edge of the hole, which was but a few yards across.

Safe on shore poor Tom in a short time recovered, and now a third party had to be admitted to the secret of the floating treasure. It was inevitable.

Dicky was nothing loath to keep a still tongue and share the plunder, and if it should prove of any value why—

"But where *is* the blessed box?" cried Tom, staring into space. Then like one man down to the water they ran, but no case was in sight.

It had vanished, and with it their hopes.

Up and down the beach they ran, but nothing could

be seen, so they followed the tide ; and in half an hour to their great joy, through the gloom, saw the case resting peacefully on the outer sand-bank.

Into the "low" they dashed and waded across to their treasure, shivering from head to foot with cold, their knee-caps and jaws rattling like the feet of a marionette, and floated the case across the low to the shore in triumph.

"Landed! Now what shall we do?"

"Smash her open?"

"No, let's ha' a squint at her fust."

Then Dicky fancied he could see some big writing on the side, and Jerry ran to his clothes and got his match-box, for Dicky and Tom were both clothed and everything upon them saturated.

First match, no go.

Second match lit and went out.

Third match blown out also.

Fourth all right, and screened carefully that it should not be seen by anyone who might be upon the beach at this dark hour of midnight.

The match flickered for a few seconds, but that few seconds was ample for Dicky to spell out the one word painted in black letters on the side of the case, although it was upside down.

He spelled out rapidly W-A-T-C-H-E-S, and Tom saw it too; Jerry shook too much to see anything, besides he was shielding the match.

And then the light went out.

They stared at each other open-eyed and opened-mouthed, those organs being so distended as to be visible even in the darkness of the night.

Each commenced an exclamatory comment, but neither finished his remark, so great was his astonishment.

"Well, I'll be——," said Tom.

"Jumping dodmen! wha-a-t?" cried Jerry, and Dicky joined in with

"This beats all I ever——well!"

Then they dragged their prize to the foot of the great black cliffs and held a council of war.

Said Dicky: "Old T—— from B—— will be along here about now, wondering what's become of me. I'll go along and make my meeting with him, and then come back to you. So keep you quiet and don't do anything till I return."

Old T——, it may be mentioned in parenthesis, was the coastguard from B——.

It may not be generally known, that every night at a certain time, the coastguards round England have to walk two or three miles, and meet another from the next station, to whom he hands a dispatch to prove that they met and are on the alert. A failure to meet is a severe breach of duty, and an inquiry is held to reprimand or punish the culprit.

In half an hour Dicky returned, jubilant that his fellow boatman had not noticed his saturated state, and then the three knocked their heads together to ascertain what was their next and best move.

"No one must know of this hare haul," wisely remarked Jerry, looking emphatically at his comrades. "We are made men, all t'ree on us, and when I sail in one mornin' with a proper little coble, with a new lug and gear, my, 'ont they fare wholly stammed, but they'll never know nothing from me of how I got it. I'll tell 'em the man i' ther mune gan it ter me for a walentin, 'cause I was a good boy, eh?"

And then all three fell to laughing in their excitement, and counting their birds before they were hatched.

"Maybe," said Dicky, "they are not *all* watches, perhaps there are a few chains and brooches and such like, but then they will all sell well, and what ho! for a little pub when I quit the service. Free glasses every night to both of you, mates."

"Lor lum'me!" chimed in Tom, "these watches are likely to dole out about a bushel apiece, but s'posen they on'y come to a peck each, yew 'ont find me sweatin' for no more masters, I'll ha' my own smithy with a little pightle at the back, so thet I can turn my dicky inter it, 'stead of letting him feed about the deeks and holls like he du now."

And so they rattled on, with trembling limbs and glittering eyes, till they bethought them that it was time to be acting instead of talking; accordingly, after sage cogitation, Dicky was dispatched to his home for a lantern, hatchet, and hammer, and Tom to his for three bushel skeps, in which to carry their valuable treasure, while Jerry in his dry clothes remained to guard the case.

After waiting an hour—which Jerry thought quite two—first Tom and then Dicky returned, keeping stealthily in the black shadow of the mighty cliff. Tom had his three skeps, one inside the other, and the whole bunch whelmed over his head for easy carriage.

“All serene, sonny?” queried Tom under his breath.

“All cor-rect, bor!” from Jerry, as a kind of sign and countersign.

Then came Dicky with a short crowbar and a bill-hook, but no lantern. This he could not get as one of the other coastguards was about, and in the very room where the lanterns hung.

“Never mind, Dicky, we are poor chaps if we can’t open a case and fill a few skeps in the dark,” quoth Jerry; “so, mate, fire away, and let’s get at these here little beauties.”

So Dicky set to work, and with many cautions of “Steady;” “Mind you don’t break ’em;” “D’ye hear ’em tick?” etc., the lid was at last prized off, and the thick layer of superincumbent shavings removed with trembling hands and quickly drawn breath.

Beneath were a number of very symmetrical oblong packages, one of which was gingerly removed by Jerry.

“Light,” said he sententiously, as he weighed it in his hand; and then, fumbling in the dark, proceeded to undo the package.

At last the packet suddenly fell apart into a hundred segments, each part being a miniature oblong counter-

part of the parent package, and was scattered here and there over the soft sand.

"There!" cried Tom and Dicky in the same breath, "yow're dun it now, bor!"

Jerry without replying knelt and groped on the sand, and found a little packet which had a familiar feel in his hand, and this he now quickly tore open, and excitedly uttered, with considerable emphasis, these words:

"Matches! I'm d——!"

CHAPTER III.

THE INNOCENTS' SUMMER CRUISE.

THE lively little "Pillbox" was a capital little craft of seven tons register—neither too big nor too small for a party of four—a number which may be taken as the ideal party for a cruise, enough for comfort, and not enough to divide into petty factions obnoxious to each other in the matter of choice of food, "where shall we go?" etc.

One roomy cabin, a larder, lavatory, forepeak for man and cooking, and a well-lockered stern-sheets constituted the accommodation. Sufficient for all purposes and no more.

Let the Innocents stand forth for inspection.

Burley S——, handy as shifting ballast.

Long E——, handy for disentangling ropes without ascending the mast.

Stuggy K——, useful for cheek in foraging expeditions and interviewing irate landowners after a trespass.

Weedy P——, handy for firing jokes at, finding non-existing beauties, and writing verses.

Then there was the man L——, useful as cook, sailing

master, and everything else that required the least exertion or trouble, and really, for utility, worth the four members of the party rolled into one.

Now what is related in this veritable chapter may be strictly true or it may not ; and although the chapter is headed *a* cruise, it may mean several cruises squeezed into one ; but anyway, there lies the "Pillbox" at a certain well-known quay at Yarmouth, and the four heroes (by a slip of the pen I had nearly written duffers) and their man, having cast off from the said wharf or quay, float gaily across the flowing tide and stick firmly on the mudbank so conveniently placed at the mouth of the Bure, a butt for passing wherry-men and pleasure-seekers.

The tide is rising, so our heroes, like true yachtsmen, wipe the mud off their hands, and grin and bear it. They have failed at banks before, and sometimes a bank failure results in a good send-off after all, at least such was the opinion of P——, who calmly reclined on a locker in the cabin, and book and pencil in hand began an epic on much the same lines as if the craft had been the Ark resting on Ararat, instead of the "Pillbox" wallowing on the ooze.

Sorry to use threats so early on the voyage, E——, finding the yacht lively, ordered the poet on deck, and placing a muddy rope in his hand ordered him to pull for all he was worth. He was apparently bankrupt, for all his pulling would not have detached a limpet from its native fastness.

But presently with a yo! heave, ho! and pulling till

their backbones crackled again, off bounced the "Pill-box," and the Bure's mouth received another tooth (white hulled yacht). Under those two ugly bridges and past the picturesque old North Gate, and then up sail, and away to—for the Weedy one at least—regions unknown. It was his first cruise, so of course he must commence a diary, and informed his comrades that he should be "awfully glad if they would add a few impressions here and there, don't cher know!"

And they did.

Now for right down wretched monotony and absence of interest in scenery, the ten miles from Bure mouth to Stokesby village would be hard to beat in all England. There is literally nothing worth looking at, and less to write about—even the cottages are literally a mile or more apart, and are known as the one-mile house, two-mile house, etc.

This being so, Weedy was requested to start his diary, and to particularly notice the diversity of scenery and the many little items of interest passed on each mile of the voyage; and L——, the man, or as we called him, Chuckle, would tell him when we passed each 'mile-house.'

Weedy got the flat dreary marshland down famously; he described it thus:

"The view after leaving Yarmouth is very extensive, the sun-kissed meadows stretching away into the purplish-azure of the distance as far as the human eye has power of vision."

Then came the ten thousand cattle several times repeated : cousins, sisters, and aunts to those which gave the Zulu King Cetewayo more idea of Queen Victoria's wealth than anything he saw during his visit to England. Those speckled, dotted, and party-coloured cattle Weedy had summed up in a very poetic paragraph commencing :

"Lo! the myriads of cattle which dot the verdant plains with gems of colour."

Stuggy suggested and maintained that instead of "Lo! the myriads," it should commence, "The *cattle* low ;" but persisting, to Weedy's annoyance, Burley in stentorian tones commanded him to "*Lay* low," which he did accordingly.

Weedy brought in the azure sky and the glistening river very prettily, but left the mud, which lay fat, and shiny by either bank, severely alone.

All this was very pleasant for the first mile, but when the same thing was repeated during the second mile, his ideas upon the same themes grew less.

The third mile made him nervous.

The fourth mile of the same kind of scenery and cattle made him halt and tap his forehead for fresh ideas and inspiration. The fifth wearied him, and when the sixth started in the same way he utterly collapsed.

Mud, marsh, and murky sky (for it was only his poetical license that made him write azure) had done their fell work, and the journalistic poet looked unutterable things at his jocular persecutors.

Still Weedy was not a fellow to owe anyone a grudge, and soon forgot his breakdown.

Presently Linear, as they dubbed E. from his length, was taken with a happy thought, and seizing the neglected diary wrote :

If scenery in this part of Norfolk were written in cookery book style it would work out thus: "Bure Pudding—Take as much marshland as required, with a liberal sprinkling of cattle, roll together with a few clouds, moisten with a muddy whirling river, to which add a fair amount of oleaginous mud. Stir well together and flavour with a few whiffs from the manure works.

"Time for cooking, from three to four hours. Enough for four" (and to spare?).

Weedy murmured something about "Sublime to the ridiculous," and then to keep his comrades company sank into silence and finally slumbered.

Stokesby *was* reached at last, and then came a well-earned meal.

Making a Hash of it.

With big plans for the morrow's fishing near Acle, Chuckle was sent ahead to bait certain likely places a mile or so past the bridge, while the noble quartette cooked the dinner, of which everyone stood in great need considering it was now five p.m. Clever K—— constituted himself cook, and the dish was to be stewed

mutton with plenty of onions and potatoes cut up with it—a kind of Irish stew.

Burley was what he called Onioneer, or onion peeler and slicer. He performed his lachrymose task, and then going ashore, laid quietly down to take a snooze on a haycock. It required no hydraulic packing afterwards. He weighs over twenty stones. Linear peeled potatoes, set the table—only broke two plates—and then went to fetch a gallon of ale from the inn on the river bank handy.

K—— located in the peak, cooked both himself and the mutton—poking his tomato-coloured face out of the hatch now and again to get a little fresh air, for the peak was stifling.

Towards six o'clock, Burley, Linear, and also Weedy, who had been absent without leave, probably looking for a petticoat, for he was intensely amorous when not looked after, assembled in the cabin with occasional glances at their watches and sundry ravenous yawns.

“Nine hours since a blessed bit entered these rosebud lips,” sighed Burley.

“Nine gnawing hours since the lions were fed,” put in Linear, “and my stomach like the ravening lion roars mightily for its prey.”

“Aren't you almost ready, Soyer Redivivus?” cried Weedy, sticking his head through the little serving-door leading to the forepeak.

“Coming, sir! Coming!” answered the voice of the clever one from the depths of his cooking cave.

Then he was heard scrambling through the hatch on deck, and shortly after came the welcome sound of a saucepan lid rattling against the rim of the receptacle.

"He's straining off the potatoes," grunted fat Burley.

Everyone pricked up their ears; the potatoes were part of the stew.

"Shall I bring the tureen, chef?" called Weedy out of the nearest side window.

"Yes, you may," chortled Stuggy, "here's the stewed mutton. *I've just strained it off!*"

Alas! it was but too true, the lovely stew floated in greasy circles and bubbles merrily away to Yarmouth.

The Biters Bitten.

Angling a mile beyond Acle—by Fishley Mill is often decidedly good, but sometimes emphatically bad. You take your station and you take your chance.

Luck at angling appears to go in the same groove as kissing, it goes by favour—one by favour of the gods, and the other by favour of the goddesses—the inn-keeper's daughter by preference—the local Hebe.

Weedy, poor man, was given a couple of long lines and told to go ledgering from the bridge—just merely to keep him from pottering around the other three fellows and spoiling their sport.

A bullet was attached to the end of each cable, and a couple of hooks lashed on in the vicinity. A broken pot half filled with worms was given him, and he was

told to bait his hooks, fling them over the highest part of the bridge, and haul in on the stroke of every hour. All to meet at the yacht at six p.m.

Thus having got rid of troublesome Weedy, the trio set out to angle at their appointed haunt, chortling inwardly at their ruse.

Poor luck attended their efforts, although they had a very pleasant day, and about half an hour before the appointed time they reeled up and gambolled back along the river wall, laughing at the trick they had played on Weedy.

"Poor old beggar," said one, "let's make him envious, empty the creel and half fill it with grass, then put the fish in again."

The creel was emptied, the grass stuffed in with a few stones to make it heavy, and the score or so of miserable little fish replaced, the biggest of course on top.

The yacht was reached, and Weedy, who was expected to be disgusted and asleep in the cabin hailed, Burley meantime pretending to stagger under his load of fish.

But no Weedy answered the hail ; in his place Chuckle popped up his head and informed the trio that Mr. P. (Weedy's patronymic) was still on the bridge.

Then those three asses set down the creel and danced round it like three little school nippers. Yes, roared to think poor Weedy had passed a whole day trying where no one else ever attempted to catch a fish.

"Let's come and have a look at him," said Linear,

straightening himself up after being bent like a staple with laughter.

And away they trotted along the nubby path of the river wall.

Presently they met a boy with a pail—a pail level full of fish, principally bream running from two to three pounds apiece.

A sudden idea struck Stuggy.

“Where are you taking those fish, my lad?”

“Down to a gentleman’s yacht at Fishley, sir!”

Then the naughty man bargained with the boy to borrow the pail and its contents for a few minutes.

“You stop here, my lad, and we will be back in twenty minutes with your fish, and you shall have sixpence for yourself. We want to show them to a friend.”

As they walked bridgeward Burley ejaculated: “This little lot just shows you how these yokels net this river; scandalous, is it not?”

When they came in sight of the bridge they could see old Weedy’s head popping about, a sight which gave them much glee.

“What cheer, old man!” sang out Linear, as they approached the bridge; “what luck?”

Weedy languidly replied that it was tiring work; whereupon the comrades nudged each other and had much ado to keep their countenances.

“Oh! we haven’t found it so. Just look at our catch?”

Weedy gazed at the scaly monsters and congratulated them on their luck, with a merry little twinkle in his eye.

"Fine lot indeed," he warbled.

"Oh!" put in Burley, "but these are not all, we only brought them to show you as a sample of what we have caught."

"I'm sorry you have had no luck; dear me, I am afraid you have not attained the knack of angling successfully," said Stuggy loftily to Weedy.

"We'll give you a lesson to-morrow and show you how you should manage it," chimed in Linear.

Then catching each other's eyes they could contain themselves no longer. They roared at poor Weedy's hours of abortive vigilance.

"But haven't you caught *anything*?" inquired Stuggy.

"Oh yes," replied Weedy diffidently, "a few; I'll show you; come here."

They followed Weedy, ready to roar at his mighty catch, when behold in a hollow of the grass by the side of the approach to the bridge lay about a couple of stone of as fine bream and rudd as one would wish to see.

Burley nearly dropped the pail in astonishment.

"Not so bad for a *novice*, you must own," exclaimed Weedy, "when you add the pailful you are so obligingly carrying, and which I gave a boy twopence to take to the yacht, you asses!"

"When shall we three meet again," ejaculated Linear, as he scratched his head and felt his ears for fear they had sprouted like Bottom's in "A Midsummer Night's Dream."

Weedy was a piscatorial hero, and never again

during the cruise did his friends speak of teaching him angling ; it was a clear case of the biter being bit.

The Jolly Young Waterman.

One bright morning, while the "Pillbox" was on the Ant, Linear and Burley thought they would take the dinghy and have a pull. The former was to pull out and the latter home, the object of the pull being a certain little inn a mile from the river bank, boasting a very fair bowling-green.

Burley was inclined to bibulousness on every legitimate occasion, and Linear loved his glass of ale, especially with a nice nobbly crust of bread and cheese after either a walk or a pull ; and what Englishman does not ?

The yacht lay near Ant mouth, with the dinghy astern, its sail drying in the gentle breeze, which was not enough for sailing purposes.

"Tumble in, Linear, and let me get into the stern-sheets and take the lines," said Burley gaily.

"Yes, old man, for goodness' sake let me get in first, else if you plump down in the stern with no one else in for ballast, you'll make the boat turn a somersault over your head. A good pull every day will shrink some of that twenty stone of yours, and you will go home again like a dandy lifeguardsman, eh ? "

Away they went, Burley warbling that old sea song, "The Blackbird," till Ludham Bridge, that "eye of a needle," so abhorred of yachtsmen, came in sight.

“If I were a blackbird I’d whistle, I’d sing,
I’d follow the ship that my true love sail in;
And in the top rigging I’d there build my nest,
And lie with my head on her lily-white breast.”

“By Jove, Linear, you must pull your best now,” said Burley, as he ceased warbling, “there is quite a party of young ladies watching you from the bridge, and among them the vicar’s daughter and the squire’s two nieces. Now then, away you go; nice long clean strokes, and plenty of back in it.”

Linear, who is strong as a mule, and a very fair oarsman, made the little boat shoot along at racing speed without indicating outwardly the amount of muscle he was putting into it.

“That’s it, keep up that stroke, and I’ll put you through that confounded arch as clean as a whistle,” said Burley in a whisper. “That’s prime! that’s——”

Crash!

The oars flew out of Linear’s hands, and the hero was suddenly deposited in the bottom of the boat with great emphasis, while Burley, with great celerity, and without even saying good-bye, turned a somersault over the stern. Plump!

The ladies meantime fell into convulsions of laughter, especially when they saw Burley strike out for the bank blowing like an apoplectic grampus.

What had happened? Had the boat been struck by lightning? No, they had simply forgotten to unstep the mast.

Verily, Pride goeth before a Fall.

A Fall in Grain.

Boating adventures might be multiplied *ad infinitum*, but one that occurred at Dilham Bridge might have been attended with fatal results had the boat been moored a yard nearer the arch.

Two gentlemen, strangers to the district, had moored their boat close to the bridge so that they might the better fish under its arch where the water was deeper, and the shadow of the bridge serve to make themselves a little less conspicuous.

As they sat quietly plying their rods and chatting in low voices, their boat was suddenly capsized by having its side burst out with a loud crash, and themselves and impedimenta thrown into the violently agitated water.

What could have occasioned such a sudden shock? One might guess many times without getting even near the answer.

Near the bridge runs the single line railway between Horning and Stalham stations, and a passing engine gave a sudden piercing whistle that so frightened the horse attached to a tumbril of corn being drawn over the bridge, that the animal backed violently against the side of the bridge, sending one of the sacks of corn completely over the parapet. This fell plump between the two anglers, who fortunately were at opposite

ends of the boat, and striking the gunwale, sent boat and anglers to the bottom.

The moral to be drawn from this anecdote is that a fall in corn is not always a blessing to all men, and that anglers should avoid bridges for fear of "getting the sack."

Kamptulicon Pudding.

What yachtsman on Norfolk waters does not know the grassy, undulating meadow flanked by the ancient gateway of the Abbey, with an eighteenth century wind-mill tower thrust through it, like the arrow thrust through a heart we were wont to see on valentines when we were little boys?

Of course everyone knows it.

But Weedy did not, for it was his first voyage, and therefore he was the more impressed with it; and being of an impressionable nature (and also of an inordinate appetite), what wonder is there that he should so absorb Linear's descriptions of the Abbey's palmy days as to dream what Burley and Stuggy called a lot of "Tommy rot?"

The dinner on the memorable occasion was very late, and consisted of baked loin of pork as the *pièce de résistance*, and a wonderful pudding which Chuckle had concocted. He called it baked suet pudding. What the eaters called it does not matter, but from that day they never set eyes on a strip of kamptulicon which had previously filled a corner of the cabin floor; anyway,

suffice it to say that Weedy, by reason of the heat and the indigestible viands, could not sleep.

Being of a romantic turn of mind he quietly left the cabin and wandered, with a rug and pillow over his arm, into the Abbey grounds. Here he would lie him down, and if he could not sleep he could think, and perchance dream of the past in a night reverie.

He found a nice corner in a quoin of the wall of the decayed fane, and noticing a stack of hurdles and some fodder, made himself a comfortable couch, pillowed his head, and covered himself cosily with his rug. Then he thought and thought and meditated, and at last dreamed, or says he did—it is all the same. Let him lie for himself in his own words.

A ROMANCE OF ST. BENET'S ABBEY.

FYTTE YE FIRST.

“It was a hot day, and I had tramped the flat, dusty Broadland roads for ten weary hours, when I came in sight of a lofty, spire-crowned tower amid several other buildings, enclosed by a massive and lofty wall of masonry, flanked by a fine Gothic gateway, sculptured and enriched with deeply chisselled coats of arms.

“I knew it intuitively to be St. Benet's Abbey, and glancing dubiously at my modern tourist suit and leather boots, wondered if the good monks would give me a night's lodging. I knew of their hospitality, but somehow in my weariness I appeared to realise that dates in

my mind had become much mixed, I had apparently retrograded several centuries—had stridden back, in fact, to mediæval times.

“Anyhow, I was tired and lost, and miles from any inn, so with a bold front I approached the great oaken gate and looked for the bell—but bell there was none ; a heavy iron cross suspended by staples clasping the rounded ends of the arms seemed to indicate its use as a knocker, and raising the foot of the cross I brought it down smartly several times upon an iron striking plate, the result being several reverberating and loud echoes from the vaulted inner-arched gateway.

“An oak panel was withdrawn from behind an iron grille, and its place taken by a rather dirty fat face, set with beady dark eyes. The face opened and a voice asked : ‘ Good traveller, why in such haste ? Know ye not that this be the hour of vespers ? What wantest thou ? ’

“I was somewhat nonplussed, and would have replied, ‘ A chop or steak, mashed and roll, and a pint of bitter,’ but my reception confirmed my idea of *anno domini*, and I was now convinced that I had slidden back to the fifteenth century, and had brought a nineteenth century vocabulary and outfit with me that I must make the best of, so I replied :

“ ‘ Good sir, I would fain with your leave rest here for the night, and perhaps you could set me up with a bit of supper ? ’

“The massive oaken door swung on its hinges, and I was

admitted to the full-length gaze of the astonished porter, who had apparently never before seen a fellow in a tweed suit, for he eyed me askance from top to toe, his little beady eyes opening to an abnormal size with astonishment.

"I was shown into a small vaulted room, which was pleasantly cool after the sultriness of the day, and sat down on a long oak bench and wondered what would be the next move.

"The porter, who had now been reinforced by half a dozen grubby-looking, barefooted, shaven-headed monks, pointed to my feet, and kindly asked :

"'Will the weary pilgrim remove his foot coverings, and don this pair of sandal shoon? It is the rule of our Order that tired pilgrims should be so comforted after a needful washing of their weary feet. Alack! an' I have not better!' he apologized, as I took the curious rush-made affairs from his fat hands.

"I bathed my tootsies as desired, grateful for the attention, and then noticed that my half-guinea balmorals and my socks were being handed round for inspection amid suppressed laughter.

"'Bless the sandals, how do they go?' I exclaimed sotto voce, as I failed to make them stick to my feet.

"Peter, the porter, noticed my embarrassment, and kindly adjusted the straps round my ankles and over my instep, as I whispered in his ear :

"'Give my boots a bit of a polish in the morning, old chap, and I'll give you the usual when I leave.'

“Peter was amazed, and I had difficulty in explaining my meaning, as he did not appear to have any blacking on the premises.

“I was getting embarrassed again, and to get away from the constantly increasing throng of monks, who trooped in to see the stranger now that vespers were ended, I asked Peter if there was any objection to my having a smoke.

“Peter did not comprehend my meaning, and in his turn, becoming embarrassed, called on the monks to aid in expounding my meaning. But they too failed to enlighten him.

“Then to make my request clear I produced my pouch, pipe, and vesta case, but the sight of these curiosities only led to more complications; they had never seen such things, and failed to see for what purpose I carried them.

“Failing in my explanation I next proceeded to demonstrate their use. I loaded my briar-root and struck a fusee, when to my amazement the whole shoot of monks fled from my presence, as if I had been Apollyon himself dropped in among them. They evidently took me for some demon from the nether regions, and while one ran to tell the Abbot, another stood just outside the doorway and rattled out voluble sentences in Latin, which I took to be some form of exorcism, and probably it was.

“I was naturally now upset, and looked out of the little leaded casement for my good friend Peter, but

that burly worthy was the centre of a group of monks who stood near the middle of the Cloister Garth.

"I opened the rattling casement and beckoned him to approach, but he only shook his head.

"There was only one other way to secure the kind offices of the porter ; if Peter would not come to me, I must go to Peter.

"Out I strode accordingly, pipe in mouth, but as I advanced the monks fled in all directions, and hid themselves in various parts of the cloisters, so as to be unseen while they kept a wary eye on me. What was amiss?

"I sat down on a bench by the stone sun-dial and awaited the development of events.

"I had not long to wait, for presently, amid a crowd of monks came the Abbot himself, preceded by another posse of ecclesiastics armed with quarter-staves and ropes.

"The Abbot approached, and I, alarmed at the turn things had taken, arose, and, placing my pipe on the sun-dial, made him a stately bow.

"Good ; that soothed the tonsured crowd somewhat, so that the Abbot came quite close to me, and uttered sundry high sounding Latin phrases, which were meant either for blessings or curses, or possibly were some form of exorcising evil spirits, for he finished up by pointing to my pipe.

"I took it up and handed it to him, but he recoiled with horror.

"Then I threw it upon the ground and trod it,

smoking, into the turf, apologizing as well as I was able for smoking within the Monastery walls.

"He appeared to understand somewhat of my meaning, for he spoke to a brother, who stepped forward with a pair of tongs (he was evidently a monk who wrought in ironwork) and seized my pipe, bearing it away to his forge at arm's-length. My pouch and fusee-box followed suit.

"A few minutes' conversation with the Abbot quite disabused his mind of my having any dealings with the Old One, and we shook hands before the whole assembly.

"I soon found myself seated in the Refectory, at the right hand of the Abbot, while the lower and larger tables were occupied by the monks. All were silent as they consumed their poor fare, except one or two privileged ones who sat at the Abbot's table.

"Under one of the lofty, pointed windows sat an old monk, who, perched upon a high stool, read aloud from a big black letter book chained to a tall desk in front of him. He had lost several teeth, so mumbled his sentences very much, but his incoherence mattered little, nobody attended to him, for all eyes were turned covertly on me.

"I suppose it must have been a fast day, for the fare seemed to me very untoothsome and unsatisfactory. Every monk had a wooden bowl of parched peas, a lettuce, and a hunk of black rye bread, while to wash this dry fare down, big leathern bottles or jacks of water

were handed round, from which each man drank to soften his peas, and to help down the sawdust-like bread.

"Seeing that I proceeded but slowly with my parched peas, the Abbot whispered me to save my appetite, and spare my teeth, as I should dine with him anon.

"The Abbot and I got on famously after a while, and conversed on many topics in a low tone, until the Abbey clock struck the hour, when I unconsciously took out my watch to see if London time synchronized with that of Norfolk. The Abbot begged to look at the 'little clock,' as he called it, and marvelled when he placed it to his ear and heard it tick; he sat minute after minute with my watch in his hand, observing the second hand perform its short journey.

"'Gramercy!' he cried, regardless of the wonted silence of the Refectory, 'never did mine eyes light upon such a miracle. I' faith it is a clock in a nutshell.'

"As it was only a half-guinea machine-made ticker I begged the worthy father to keep it as a memento of my visit.

"He hesitated at first, but presently accepted it, much to my satisfaction.

"Grace was now sung in tones that rumbled away in solemn echoes among the high pitched oaken beams and rafters, and I was requested to follow the Abbot to his own private sanctum.

"The bare stone walls of the Refectory were changed for the tapestried chamber of the Abbot, and everything in the cosy apartment was more in keeping with the

snuggery of a noble of the time, than a supposedly ascetic churchman. Yet I could not grumble, and at the bidding of the Abbot sat down on a quaint black oak chair covered with otter-skins, those animals being doubtless very numerous in the district at that period. Everything in the apartment was of the very best quality, even to the fair white cloth with which the table was covered.

“Goodly platters of silver ware graced the board, and even the beakers and salt cellars were of that precious metal.

“A smile of satisfaction lighted the churchman’s face as he glanced over the table and signed to me to draw up my chair, which I gladly did, as it was now nearly twelve hours since I broke my fast, except for a handful of those dreadful hard peas in the Refectory.

“‘Fall to, my friend, and fare well, for although this be an unusual fast day with us, I must needs take a something for my poor stomach’s sake.’

“I glanced at the *poor* part of his anatomy. Four good feet round if he was an inch.

“‘By your kind leave, father, I will indeed fall to, for I am famished.’

“And I *did* eat.

“Perch there were, and fine tench too, and eels fried and stewed, all from the Monastery fish-ponds. Eggs also and furmety were there, and as the good man said, a fine fat capon for my benefit, but I noticed that after he had served me he mortified himself with a liberal slice of the breast, to say nothing of the parson’s nose

and the liver wing. Then there was a noble warden pie, to which I paid my compliments; also to many other little delicacies with which the table was laden.

"We commenced the liquid portion of our refection with copious libations of strong ale, brewed during the previous autumn, and now getting decidedly nappy with keeping. This 'hogwash,' however, the Benedictine soon forsook, pouring himself out a mighty flagon of sack, which I noticed he mixed with some old and strong mead, made by one of the community some years before. It was rare Old Stingo!

"Getting talkative over our meal we compared notes, and astonished one another by the many curious things each told the other. My nineteenth century yarns tickled the prelate, and his were equally well received by his guest, especially as his stories were couched in such quaint language as to give great point and piquancy to his jests.

"Many of his words and ideas, his sporting terms, and names of various articles, were quite beyond me; much of his chatter being obsolete to my modern ears.

"What my conversation to him must have been I cannot surmise, but I endeavoured as much as possible to omit all mention of modern invention, such as post offices, trams and buses, trains and steamships, and kept mostly to sporting items, of which he appeared to be very fond.

"From chatting we commenced to what he termed 'tune our lay.' The Abbot had a voice like a bull, and

turn for turn, gave me many quaint ditties in exchange for those I happened to know.

“He sang ‘A lyttel gyste of Robyn Hode,’ and I gave him ‘Hearts of Oak,’ in the chorus of which he laughed till the tears streamed down his great cheeks. Then he sang ‘The Romaunt of Isoline,’ a love ditty, during which he accompanied himself on a curious stringed instrument, somewhat like a guitar, strumming it lustily the while. My turn came next, and I warbled ‘Sally in our Alley,’ in my most dulcet tones, the Abbot playing a vamping accompaniment on his instrument.

“I noticed that at the end of each song a copious libation was indulged in by the priest, and I wondered how he could contain such a vast quantity of sack and canary. Redder and redder grew his face as he trolled in hiccoughing tones the ‘Ballarde of Marian Myne,’ and as I helped him sing the last chorus,

“‘Adowne, adowne, my merry mayd,
Adowne, adowne, my deary, oh!’

he quietly slipped from his seat to the floor, where he snored loudly.”

FYTTE YE SECOND.

“I gazed at his rotund form and noted his stertorous breathing, which both suggested to me the one word—apoplexy. I raised his head therefore, placing a rush hassock under it, and then looked for another to make

his headrest wider, for he had a mighty cranium which required much support.

"As I peered beneath the table, what was my surprise to see a pair of dainty little tapestry embroidered slippers!

"'Ho, ho!' I murmured, as I drew them forth and glanced at the Abbot's great fat pedal arrangements, shod with sandals of bull-hide, and bound round his feet with neatly cut and ornamented leathern straps. 'Ho, ho! what mystery is here. Never since the days of childhood have *your* feet entered a pair of shoes such as these,' I surmised, and was going to add more to the disparagement of the ecclesiastic's tootsies, when the door of the chamber opened with a little squeak, and in glided the dainty but plump figure of a female richly dressed, and in a style becoming her years, which could not amount to more than twenty, if as many.

"I was spellbound at the apparition, which came half across the chamber, its finger upon its lips as a sign to me not to break silence.

"I pointed to the recumbent figure, and to my eyes, to signify that the Abbot slumbered, and caught the words from my fair visitor's lips:

"'Thank heaven and our ladye for it.'

"She was flesh and blood at all events; I was glad of that, for some of these mediæval apparitions perform nasty little tricks upon those who seek to lay them.

"She beckoned me, and I tripped out on tip-toe,

following her along a gloomy passage to a little anteroom or study built over a small square tower.

"Here she paused, and closing the door, lighted a little lamp, and straightway flopped down at my feet in a truly dramatic style.

"'My preserver,' she began, 'for although thou hast donned the garb of a mummer, yet can these weary eyes of mine pierce thy disguise, and discover the true heart of chivalry hidden beneath thy mummer's garment. Fly with me, my own sweet knight, ere the morning's sun doth gild the sky, and I will be thine own true marrow for weal or woe.'

"'Madam,' I began, 'you certainly have the advantage of me, I am no true knight, simply an humble tourist, don't cher know, who seeks a quiet night's lodging in this—this hostel.' I nearly said hotel, but fortunately remembered the date in time. Then I continued:

"'May I inquire, miss, without giving offence, who you are, and why you are here in a place taboo to the female sex?'

"'Alas, kind knight,' she replied, as I gently raised her from the rush-strewn floor and placed her on a cushioned seat in the window, 'I am a prisoner here, detained by that ponderous prelate the Abbot much against my will, and probably for my eventual dishonour, for the Abbot when in his cups doth persecute me sorely.'

"'Yes, yes,' I interrupted, 'but now I remember that at supper the old boy spoke of his pretty little niece. Are you she?'

“‘Nay, fair sir! He calls me his niece truly, but i’ faith I am no kin nor kith of his, though he would have men so suppose. My father, whose castle lies at Caister, near the little fishing village y’clept Yaremouthe, is away in fair Aquitaine doing his *devoir* under the banner of our good lord the King.’

“‘By Jove! But how, being no relative of the Abbot’s, do you come here, fair ladye?’ I again interrupted, dropping the modern miss; ‘is it against your will that you are thus held in bondage? If so, I will certainly do my best to——’

“‘Hush! someone approaches, this is the Abbot’s private penance room in which I perform my devotions. Be silent, prythee.’

“A gentle tap upon the door sent a thrill through my whole tweed-clad frame.

“‘Yes, good Antony! I pray thee let me but linger one more glass here, and I will promise thee to retire to my bed-chamber,’ said my fair companion without opening the door.

“‘Nay, lady,’ came the reply, ‘thou knowest the Abbot’s command. Midnight should see thee in thy chamber; an’ if I see not the Abbot’s orders carried out he will somewhat rudely chide me, mayhap with his stinging flagellum, and after that the tormenting shirt of hair.’

“‘Prythee, one more little glass, good Antony, and I will obey thee. But ten brief minutes the sand shall run and I will retire.’

“‘Ah, well!’ came from the other side of the half open door, ‘I ever had a softer heart than a hand or I should not be here. Curse the luck that brought a kinsman’s blood upon my hand and a razor to my crown, say I. Be it as you wish, lady, but not another grain of sand must pass the glass’s narrowing, mark me.’

“Then the shuffling sound of sandalled feet grew gradually less along the corridor and presently ceased.

“I looked at my fair friend for an explanation.

“‘Antony, good stalwart Antony, is my custodian, and refers with regret to the time, when having killed his nephew in a quarrel, he fled here for sanctuary and donned the cassock. By our ladye he is a very proper man.’

“‘But, madam’—I dropped unconsciously into the modern Frenchified style again, ‘tell me more concerning yourself, for I feel deucedly interested, don’t cher know! How can I serve you, miss, eh ——?’ I paused for her name to be added.

“‘Ursula,’ she interjected.

“‘How can I help you, sweet Ursula, to escape from this dragon’s lair?’

“‘He is indeed a monstrous dragon, and thou wilt be my good patron, Saint George, wilt thou not?’ she eagerly asked, placing her hand upon my arm as she continued: ‘The dragon is old, and gross, and drunken each night with sack and canary, malvoisie, and even metheglin, of which he is right fond, whilst thou, my

own sweet knight, art young and fair, and lusty in thy strength as a warrior's war-horse.'

"These remarks, uttered with eyes upturned to mine and with warm moist hand laid upon my trembling palm, pierced right through my tweed, and hit me fair and square in the very core of my heart. In modern parlance, I was a gorner. I surrendered to her first broadside—and was in ecstasies. This was indeed something worth dropping back into the Middle Ages for!

"'But see,' said the fair maid of Caister, 'the sand runs low, I must away to my bed-chamber,' and she sighed and looked at me in embarrassment; she evidently wished to continue our *tête-à-tête*, but was fearful of Antony's return.

"'Fair Ursula!' I exclaimed, trembling for fear I might never set eyes on her more, 'when shall I see thee again? How can we arrange for your escape?'

"'Oh, vile atoms of sand within sand' (I seized the sand-glass with the intention of smashing it upon the stone floor as I spoke, but reflected), 'if your destruction would stop Time's flight but for two brief minutes I would powder you into the minutest atoms.'

"'Hush!' exclaimed Ursula, 'use no violence to my little vade mecum! I have a plan. Can you climb?'

"'Like a squirrel, my angel.'

"'Then hie thee an hour hence to my casement and climb to my window, the ivy is strong, and thou art but lightly furnished with flesh. See, yonder is my

bower; across the green-sward, there, where my taper gives but a dim relief to the darkness of my chamber. Farewell till then.'

"She was about to fly, but thought I, 'a bird in the hand is worth two in the bush,' and catching her in my arms I planted a sterling nineteenth century kiss on her mediæval lips."

FYTTE YE THYRDE.

"For nearly an hour I wandered round and round, up and down the draughty cloisters, in fact, till the great bell boomed out at midnight; then all appearing quiet I ventured beneath the Lady Ursula's casement to keep my tryst.

"It was drizzling with rain, but that mattered but little to a man so ardently eager as I to carry out a love adventure. As I looked up at the half open casement a little white hand peeped out in the dim light, and waved gently as if to encourage me in my somewhat perilous enterprise—for a climb upwards of twenty feet upon untrustworthy ivy has its dangers.

"Everything was miserably wet, and I found I was not quite up to squirrel form in climbing. I made fair progress half way up, and then coming to a blank space where the ivy had not taken kindly to the rough masonry, I had much difficulty in proceeding.

"Sometimes my foothold gave way, when I would hang on desperately with my hands, while my body dangled down like that of a man being executed, only that my feet

being free I kicked about violently to find a fresh foothold.

" Suffice it to say that after a violent struggle I arrived at the casement, Lady Ursula gave me a kindly hoist by the nape of my neck when I came within arm's-length of her. I puffed and panted like a hunter after a ten-mile spin, and was besides in a reeking perspiration, and to make matters worse I found there was no flat window-sill to sit upon—nothing but a sloping stone.

" And—the window was guarded from ingress by a horrid thick iron bar up the centre.

" I have seen pictures of lovers climbing to their lady's bower, and very comfortable they look, but I think I might claim as a title to the picture I cut—'Love in Purgatory'—and damped with a gentle falling rain at that.

" 'By jingo, Ursula! that's hard work and no mistake,' I panted.

" 'Zooks! An' I never heard gallant say that before,' she whispered in a surprised tone, checking herself suddenly, as she became aware that she might be giving herself away.

" The square iron bar cut my fingers so much that I had to ask pardon for removing my hand and placing it round my fair one's waist. She readily consented, and I was happy, only that confounded stone edge cut into my hip so badly that Purgatory ever kept beside my Paradise.

"We held a plan of campaign. It was a curious compound of Love and War.

"I avowed my love: she would put it to the test. I would go through fire and water for her: she said I must go through the lists.

"I said I would face a lion in his lair for her sake.

"She, that I must face her captor in his Abbey.

"Her idea worked out in this way.

"I must challenge the bold Abbot to mortal combat, but as his cloth would forbid him fighting personally, he would appoint a champion to meet me, so that there would be not the least difficulty in the way.

"'What should we fight with?' I innocently asked.

"'Oh! with the arms of knighthood—the lance and the sword—and possibly the little misericorde might be used,' she warbled in my ear, to which I replied but simply:

"'Oh yes, certainly.'

"But I thought a lot.

"Then fair Ursula went more minutely into details, till I sat not literally on stone, but figuratively on thorns; so much so, that I shuddered all over, more especially in the region of the lumber vertebræ.

"Cold steel somehow seemed to clash harshly with the warm love I cherished in my bosom before my climb up the ivy.

"The talk of steel and steeds, and lists and lances, presently gave place to a more amorous turn in the conversation, and I was getting on famously. My back-

bone shuddering had vanished, and my heart beat once more in the light of my lady's eyes, when suddenly from the corner of the cloisters a burly monk emerged with a lighted lantern in his left hand, and some long lissom object in his right ; what it was I could not in the dim light discern, but it did not glitter like steel, a fact I mentally noted with relief.

"A scream from Ursula caused me to turn my eyes to her, and in doing so I distinctly saw the door of her bower open, and the portly form of the Abbot enter, his eyes blazing with fury.

"He rushed at the shrinking girl and dragged her from my grasp, causing me nearly to be precipitated to the ground twenty feet below. His look was terrible ; his bloodshot eyes burning with a malignancy I have never seen equalled. He appalled me.

"Had I wished to fly to the lady's succour that cursed iron bar would have prevented me, beside which, that stalwart monk with his lantern was standing beneath me, requesting me to descend with as much celerity as I could command, otherwise he would come up and hurl me down. He also said something about my weazand and a goodly blade, but I must confess I was too nervous to understand quite all he did say.

"At last with much clutching and clawing I succeeded in getting within six feet of the ground, where my waistcoat caught in a strong spur of the ivy and left me dangling helplessly. It was then that I discovered that the wand in the strong hand of the monk was made of

leather. In the parlance of the period 'I roared me right lustily,' for the strap was applied without stint.

* * * * *

"The rest consists of a damp, slimy cell, coarse bread and water."

FYTTE YE FOURTHE.

"I escaped; not up the chimney, for such a convenience was not to be found in my cell, and laid the case of the Lady Ursula before a stout old knight in Norwich, who gladly did all that was necessary to bring about a meeting between myself and the Abbot's champion.

"I have a very hazy remembrance of practising for the joust by running tilts at a sack of sawdust strapped upright upon a horse's back, and I frequently made the sawdust fly in all directions, much to my pleasure. With the sword also I practised at a faggot of wood suspended by a rope from a baulk in a barn. With this, too, I made great havoc, causing twigs and chips to hurtle through the air in quick succession, though I must say my hand was very much jarred and blistered with my martial exercises.

* * * * *

"At last came the day of trial by battle.

"I had read of what took place in these passages of

arms, for I am an ardent admirer of Sir Walter Scott and his exciting and enchanting novels.

"I peeped from my tent. There were the lists prepared, there was a kind of double-decked marquee filled with ladies and gallants all in rich costumes, and in the case of the ladies much lacc-work and muslin veils, the latter being built above the heads of the fair wearers in butterfly structures fearful to behold.

"Great crowds of artizans, bowmen, and rag-tag and bobtail quite surrounded the lists, just as Scott gives it; he was right, I can give you my word for it.

"I also noticed heralds and pages, and many others standing in groups, or walking quietly over the green-sward; and best of all I saw the Lady Ursula—sitting pale and statue-like in the gallery of the marquee—her eyes rivetted on my tent at the end of the lists.

"There came anon a couple of attendants to gird on my armour, and in this I was very interested, watching their procedure in building me up, or rather surrounding me in a wall of steel.

"First my feet were covered with the solerets, which were about eighteen inches long, diminishing gradually till they ended in a steel point. I remember thinking what handy things they would be in a street row, or for a father interviewing an objectionable suitor for his daughter's hand.

"The greaves were then fitted and strapped, and the thigh pieces added, and the curiously ornamented grenouilles, or knee-caps, placed in position; and so on,

gradually from waist to neck, I was built up and cumbered with weight until I could scarcely walk.

"I felt shaky and dubious, and would have given ten shillings for a good deep draught of 'bitter,' or 'stout and bitter,' but such a draught was not obtainable.

"'By George,' I thought to myself, 'how the dickens am I to mount my charger? This iron business is overdone; another ten pounds added and I shall not be able even to waddle along.'

"Outside I could hear the shouts of the people, and was wondering what would be the end of me, when one of the attendants placed a circular pad on my head, which put an end to my meditations—it was to take off the weight and chafing of the great tilting heaume.

"Great Scott! this was the last straw to break the camel's back. It added a stone to my weight, and seemed as if it would slowly smother me.

"I heard the voices of the attendants standing close to me sound as if they were afar off, while my own very ordinary voice rolled around the mighty casque in muffled thunder. The feeling was dreadful, and I wished again and again that I were back into my proper century. I would give anything to be back in dear old nineteenth-century London again, with its noisy streets and tram-cars, factory chimneys, snorting trains, and countless miles of telegraph wires—I would gladly give up the love of fair Ursula, if this might be, but alas! I was a fifteenth-century knight, and must do my duty.

Had I the choice I would rather have been a full private in the militia.

"They led me out in the steel suit which covered my humble tweed, out into the open air—one step at a time, and with a waddling motion that seemed to please the crowd, who cheered till their throats were nigh splitting.

"Painfully I reached the three-stepped mounting block, against which my steed was impatiently champing his bit, and was assisted into the high-peaked saddle. Lor me! how the perspiration oozed from every pore of my body, and trickled from my forehead, and ran down my nose to the very tip, where it tickled fiendishly, and I could not even scratch my nose with my mailed hand because of the great tilting heaume upon my shoulders.

"My feelings were indescribable—even Scott with his vast amount of knowledge does not attempt it. He puts his knight on his good steed's back and gives him no more feelings or nerves than would be possessed by an automaton.

"Oh! if *I* could only be an automaton knight! Oh! for the heart and skill of an Ivanhoe or Cœur de Lion for just half an hour, I'd show——

"‘Hallo! what's this? oh, thanks, the lance.’ And a great fifteen feet scaffold pole is placed in my hand—a weapon weighing another stone at least.

"‘Oh dear! oh dear! I'm sure I shall never do it,’ I murmur to myself, as a fresh torrent of perspiration pours down my face and makes my eyes tingle so that I can scarcely see.

“‘Pluck up! Pluck up for St. George and Merry England!’ I again murmur, just to give myself courage; but in spite of my noble, bounding heart I shake like a fan suffering from palsy, so much so, that I can hear the edges of my armour rattling.

“‘Oh for a deep, deep draught of old Burton!’

“‘Eh! what did you say? oh, get ready? all right, old man; tell me when to start. Here, come closer,’ I mumble through the slit in my heaume, ‘I want to ask you something.’

“‘Are you there?’

“‘Yes, valiant knight, what askest thou?’ says my attendant.

“‘Where shall I hit him? Where do I go for him?’

“‘The throat is difficult, but his tilting helm offers a fair mark; try that, but keep a firm seat, and good St. George be your aid.’

“Now the heralds blew their trumpets, blaring away like a steam organ in a roundabout, and shaking like a leaf I manage to get my wobbling lance in rest, just as an old chap in a wonderful get-up throws a policeman’s staff on the ground and squeaks out, ‘Allez.’

“My charger, an old tilter, gives a bound forward that nearly heaves me out of my great saddle, but I flop down again, and lowering my head look through the slit in my heaume to see how matters stand.

“Yes, here comes my adversary, a long way off certainly, but growing bigger and bigger rapidly.

“As we approach, I notice something wobbling about

in the sunlight a little distance ahead of me, and am astonished to find it is the point of my lance. I grip the loom fiercely, clenching my teeth, and pointing it in the direction of my adversary, gripping the saddle between my knees, and touching my charger with my spurs as I do so. I close my eyes and live half a century's agony in five seconds.

"We met, evidently, for a blow on my cuirass nearly unhorses me, but I hang on and pull up my horse at the end of the lists to hear the news of anything that may have happened during the career.

"Loud shouts rend the air and cries of 'a' Benet!' 'a' Norwic!' are heard on every side, and I wonder what it all means. Anyway I am alive, he has not killed me, because I can feel I am still astride my horse, and can feel his ribs heaving like a mighty pair of bellows after his well run course.

"Then someone leads my horse away to a mounting block, and my heaume is removed.

"Blessed, pure air, what a privilege to breathe you once again. Yes, I am alive! But how my head buzzes, and my eyes look with indifference on the blurred kaleidoscopic colours which I know is the moving throng of people.

"A lanky man gives me a drink of acid wine from a great black leathern bottle. I take a hearty draught, a pint or so—and then another.

"'What ho! Richard is himself again!' I remark to myself. Now I can distinguish individuals, and a warden

compliments me on my skill, and I wonder what I have done to merit his praise.

"I find I broke my lance, somehow, against my opponent's helm, and nearly bore him backward from his steed. It was indeed news to me, and I involuntarily turn my eyes upward to the lance still in my hand, and sure enough about four feet of the far end are missing.

"Joy! I begin to fancy myself as a warrior, and raising a sickly smile, kiss my hand to my fair Ursula, who sits in the gallery white as marble, and as mute.

"The old gentleman—the marshal they called him—squeaks out something—something which in modern days would be 'Time, gentlemen!' and my iron pot is again whelmed over my head and carefully fastened. Then the trumpets sound, and again the marshal's squeaky 'Allez' (go it), and off thunders my horse, down goes my lance, and I aim for my opponent's chin, as this time I mean to try for a 'knock out.'

"Nearer and nearer we approach. Now for it.

"Crash! Wh-i-r-r-r!! Boomp!!!

"I am settled this time. I am dead.

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"I awoke and found the pile of sheep hurdles lying across my head and body. I was stunned for the moment, and could not rise or remember where I was.

"I looked around for the crowds of people, and the lists, and my opponent Antony, but all had vanished,

and nothing but a gloomy undulating meadow, Abbey ruins, and water were around me.

"Slowly my whereabouts dawned upon me. I was at St. Benet's Abbey, and it was raining fast, and my rug and pillow wet through.

"I returned stiff and gaping to the yacht."

"Well, old man," remarked Burley, "if you dreamed all that in an hour, you did well."

"He did indeed," chimed in Linear, "quite enough to give him brain-fever."

Of course Stuggy must say something, and he did.

"What a pity those hurdles fell on you, in another hour you would have finished a three hundred page novel *à la* Scott."

"Yes," came from one, "The Knight of Cockayne."

"Or," chimed in another, "Weedy the Wobbler, or the Tinned-ribbed Warrior."

"Or, better still," said that idiot Linear, "Escaped from Thorpe,* or the Delirious Dreamer."

And so they bantered poor Weedy, swearing that he had had no dream at all, but that he had a weak spot in his cranium, which had got damp through night air and rain, and had made him a trifle delirious.

Weedy took it all in good part, challenging any member to produce, sleeping or waking, a better concoction, on less than two pounds of raw pork, or in

* The county asylum.

Burley's case two quarts of Old Tom (strong Norfolk ale so-called).

Burley averred that he had a finer dream back in the winter, and on being pressed related the following :

"Methinks," he began, mimicking Weedy, "I stood alone in London, and methinks I had a vision that my mother and sisters away in Lancashire were dreadfully in want, in fact, starving. Remember now, my comrades all, 'tis nothing but a dream. So I put my purse in my pocket, it appeared about as large as a decent Gladstone bag, and my hat on my head, and off to the North I went.

"I arrived there apparently by wire, for I did the distance in about five seconds, and knocked at the door of my parents' dwelling—no cab required, you see ; I was simply shot from London to Lancashire by some unseen power.

"Well, as I say, I knocked at the door, which very kindly opened of its own accord, and walked to the dining-room and entered.

"There sat my sisters round the table, feasting away at a huge pie, which they appeared to be eating with great relish. I noticed also that they had neither knives nor forks, but were using their fingers *à la* Sioux Indian.

"I said nothing, but sat down and passed the plate, which was already laid for me, for a helping of pie, with which my elder sister supplied me liberally.

"It was a curious pie both in outside ornamentation

and contents, and I noticed on my plate among other tit-bits a human hand.

"Although not a practised gormand, I did not seem to take unkindly to the delicacies before me, but taking up the hand I began to gnaw away at it, and between the bites I managed to ask :

" 'Where's mother? '

"As I looked at my elder sister for a reply, gnawing away meanwhile at the tender palm of the hand, she coolly replied :

" 'Oh! mother died yesterday, so we thought we had better make her into a nice pie to save funeral expenses.'

"As she spoke the fingers and thumb clutched me by the chin and jaws, making me scream with agony. Like steel claws they fastened into my flesh, and maddened me with pain as I vainly endeavoured to break the embrace of the horrid human octopus.

"I yelled in my terror.

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"I awoke by being roughly shaken and beaten, bathed in perspiration. I had alarmed the whole household by my violent screams."

"There," said Linear, "that is something like a nightmare, not too much of it, but savoury and thrilling enough for an addition to Edgar Poe's book. But for goodness' sake let us turn the subject, I begin to feel creepy."

All agreed that they had had sufficient, but as a

matter of course everyone added more dreams and nightmares, and they being exhausted, the conversation turned to ghosts and spirits, till Chuckle, who sat in his bunk in the peak with his head thrust through the serving hatch, signified his intention of "gettin' asleep afore twalve." Then, and then only, did the yarns cease, and berths being made up, Morpheus was wooed.

During the night Chuckle began to yelp and cry out in his sleep, and twice had the hatch to be opened and an india-rubber soled shoe to be freely used to awaken him.

He murmured his thanks and was soon off again.

The Miller's Daughter.

The "Pillbox" was moored in the neighbourhood of St. Benet's for a week—at different spots—so that Ranworth and Barton, and other fishing haunts could be tried, and while lying near Ludham Bridge an opportunity occurred to test the courage of that redoubtable hero Weedy, the mediæval knight.

Weedy became enamoured of a neighbouring Sylph, and it became known to his companions that he had arranged to take her for a pull up the Ant in the evening.

An intercepted note mentioned that she would await him at eight o'clock on the river bank, a quarter of a mile past the mill, which stands on the left some mile or so beyond the bridge.

The three conspirators watched poor Weedy's movements, and that hero became very anxious to know what they were going to do in the evening. Stuggy told him they were going for a stroll to Ludham village to have a chat with some of the farmers. Weedy's eyes glittered at the intelligence, and he casually remarked that as he did not feel up to the mark for a four-mile walk he should potter about with the boat till the others returned.

"All right, old chap, please yourself. It's a free ship, you know," said Burley; and no more was said.

But something else was done. The trio concocted a letter which was supposed to come from the maiden's father, who was also supposed to be miller at the solitary *pumping* mill past which Weedy had to row. The letter was handed to Weedy by Chuckle, who told him a "little nipper had gan it t' him for the gent wot wore spetacles."

"Irstead Mill.

"SER,

"I hare yu are goen to meat my gurl to nite. Ile look arter yu with my ole gun. Ile giv yu a corter pint of dust shott in yor britches if yu dar cum parst my mil.

"Yors with a well loaden gun,

"JANES FARTHER."

The trio marked Weedy take the epistle into the cabin, but they dare not watch him read it for fear of

giving themselves away, nor would Weedy have read it in their presence for worlds.

Half an hour afterwards Weedy had evidently read it, for although he said nothing, he appeared very troubled and pale, so much so that his companions commiserated with him, and advised him to take a little cooling medicine, which to get rid of them he promised to do.

Then those three conspirators went ashore and rolled on the grass, wallowing about like three horses—just to get rid of their pent-up mirth; while poor Weedy, the poet, sat mute in the cabin with the wicked document in his pocket, and like Eugene Aram, “his mind was ill at ease.”

During the afternoon Linear, who was the artist of the party, took his oil colours down to the mill, and on the black door facing the river, at a height of about five feet from the ground, painted a life-sized face, as if it were the miller looking out of a little wicket. He admired his work and returned.

A little after seven o'clock the three friends set out for their stroll—or apparently so; but Linear doubled back along the river bank till he was opposite the mill, for he had a plan. Being a Norfolk^r born he speaks the native tongue well, and was going to use it to give Weedy a fright.

The mill was on one side of the river and he on the other, and he wished to get across, but had no boat. Such a task to him was a very light one.

Out came his knife. A couple of bundles of reed

were cut down, self bound, and fastened together with a couple of withes.

There was a nice little improvised raft.

Off came his clothes, which were placed on the reed raft, which he pushed before him as he swam. The opposite bank was regained, and the reeds and clothes dragged ashore, the former thrown into a "deck," and the clothes donned, and all in ten minutes.

Linear hid behind the mill and awaited Weedy's coming.

A little before eight—just in the crepuscular light, he heard the sound of oars as they worked in the rowlocks, and presently the well-known white dinghy, with Weedy in it, appeared round a bend.

Weedy came within a hundred yards of the mill and paused, looking round intently as he rested on his oars. Probably he saw the face painted on the mill door faintly through his glasses, for he shifted uneasily on the thwart, and working his left-hand scull edged over to the other bank.

Then from the mill came a voice :

"I sey thare, yu young faller! air yew lookin' arter my mawther? Blarm yar hide, ef yow don't tarn yar boat roun' and get back hoam, I'll fill yar carcridge wi' shot, so now yew know!"

Weedy said nothing, but paddled quietly a few strokes nearer, and again halted as the voice once more hailed him.

"Take yu my adwice, my fine faller, and go yow

hoam. I'm rite in arnest, an' my ole gun's loaden half ways up wi' shot, an' if yew come any nigher I'll plump her off rite inter yar ribs; so now yu know me!"

Weedy hesitated, and then touched his sculls in the water without going either forward or back. Again came the voice:

"So yow 'ont take my advice, eh? Well, here go then, I'll fill yar hide as full o' shot as a koishon's full o' pins."

This was too much for Weedy, who, losing his presence of mind, dropped his sculls and scrambled ashore, and ran off up the bank towards the "Pillbox" as hard as his legs would carry him.

Oh, what a falling off was there! Fancy a mediæval knight forsaking his "fair ladye" at the bidding of a peasant miller! Shades of Ivanhoe!

When Burley and Stuggy returned (from nowhere in particular at ten p.m.) they found Weedy in bed. He told them he had had an attack of spasms, and had left the boat somewhere up the river!

Spasms!

They went on deck in the moonlight to laugh, the cabin was not nearly big enough for their mirth. They wanted to stamp and hug each other and throw themselves on the ground and roll.

And they did.

Spasms! and the boat adrift *somewhere*.

About half-past ten Linear returned in the boat which he had picked up. The rascal had actually met, wooed,

and taken Weedy's maiden for a moonlight pull ! And as he said, with sparkling eyes, " Old Weedy knows a good bit of goods when he sees it. Boys ! she's a regular rustic ripper ! "

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For several days Weedy's feelings were very much upset, and any allusion to " an ole gun " or a " mawther " was like holding a red rag to a bull.

He vowed he would be level with his tormentors before the cruise was over, and he certainly did his best to turn the tables on them, and with some degree of success.

A Wet Day Afloat.

A wet day is regarded by many persons as a very unfortunate occurrence, they look upon the day as a blank, but is it so ?

Probably not ; especially if the party is upon a two or three weeks' cruise, then frequently a wet day is a relief and cessation from the usual routine of life on a yacht. It gives a rest and lull to the whole party, and brings out a deal of latent fun from the rain beleaguered yachtsmen.

A thorough wet morning *always* makes a late breakfast. It is enjoyable to pull aside the little red curtains of the tiny windows, as one lies in his berth, and looking out on the blurred and misty river (which, as Burley remarked, looks quite damp on such occasions), while

the rain patters upon the cabin top with a steady persistence, and by spattering dabs caused by the rain being blown from aloft fall impartially around amid the murmuring of the rigging, as the dank breeze play upon the tightened ropes, and to be able to say to one's self, "Well, at all events, I'm snug enough, and so are my good old comrades, and as we can't go out we'll make a cabin day of it, and smoke and joke till all's blue." A late breakfast over, out comes the inevitable pipe or cigar, and for the rest of the day everyone dwells in the clouds.

Then, as sure as fate, the cards are brought out, and beginning with crib or whist, *vingt-et-un* is reached, and finally nap for small points occupies the players. A day of cards must be on the scale of a crescendo of excitement, and so from quiet beginnings we get exciting endings.

A wet day during a cruise does no harm, but brings out the individuality of the various members of the party as much as four dry ones. A wet day indicates a man's character in a remarkable manner, and his little weaknesses and idiosyncrasies come quickly to the surface.

There is the fellow who pokes his head out of the companion way every few minutes to see if there are any signs of the rain giving over, and when he sees no change in the dismal sky, fumes and frets and makes himself a general nuisance to his comrades. He will not join in anything, and is apt to characterise every project put forward as "silly rot or kiddish." He is distinctly not the man for a yacht.

Then there is the chappie of a literary turn of mind ; give him a good book and a soft pillow for his head, and he is oblivious to rain and everything else. He is a nonentity ; tolerable, and well, if he is a bit selfish, he mars no one else's enjoyment, although he adds nothing to the pleasure of the rest of the company.

Then there is the card player. Weather is nought to him. He has his pipe and his favourite drink, and holds lucky hands. Dim clouds may roll above his head but around him all is *couleur de rose*. What more can he want, he is in clover.

On a large wherry there are usually one or two young fellows, who, full of animal spirits, cannot settle to anything ; they are boisterous, and *must* be on the move, and one does not know what they will be up to next, neither do they themselves. One minute will find them trying to do acrobatic business from a holdfast in the cabin ceiling, the next they have a pillow-fight on, and someone's glass is precipitated into its owner's lap, or comes to grief on the floor. It will not do for any elderly member of the party to try a quiet snooze, or he will be sure to have burnt cork applied to his face, or funny old men drawn on his bald head with ink and a feather.

What can be done with such ?

Not much. They may be kept in bounds, but are utterly irrepressible, and there are mixed ideas as to whether these young gentlemen should be classed among the wicked or the good. Probably the voting would go

according to the particular temperament of the person voting.

Fat old Beefing would vote them an intolerable nuisance, while the ladies would probably reckon them the life, if not the soul, of the party.

Probably the idiosyncrasies, the likes and the aversions of individuals, come out more during a Broadland cruise than under any other circumstances. People are thrown together more, and their natures *will* peep out, try as they will to hide their foibles.

Most decidedly the ladies' characters show to the greatest advantage during a cruise; the gentlemen must allow that, as a body, the ladies carry the palm for even temper, and willingness to accept whatever occurs, either in the way of mishap or weather, as thus :

Swearing Permitted.

On a certain cruise a yacht was carelessly run upon a mudbank while the party were at breakfast.

Up poked a male head above the companion hatch with "What's up? "

"Run on the putty, somehow," was the reply.

Then the gentleman commenced: "Why the ——" etc., etc., and turned purple with rage.

Anon popped up a lady's head, and a silvery voice asked :

"Anything wrong? "

"We're aground on the mud, miss."

The young lady clapped her hands as she exclaimed gleefully :

“ Oh ! how lovely ! ”

Now the idea of the writer is to point out the irascibility of a male yachtsman in time of mishap, and to show in the reverse picture how happily and with what calmness a lady yachtsman will take the same misfortune. That is very nice at a glance, and the comparison might very well be left to take care of itself ; but let us add a line or two, and see how things pan out.

“ For two solid hours that gentleman and his man pushed, and tugged, and sweated, and swore. A quant was broken and two pairs of unmentionables split across the broadest part before the yacht again rode in deep water.”

Now, how does the moral read?

“ Where ignorance is bliss it is correct form to laugh. Where knowledge sees unnecessary toil it is permissible to swear.” (Inwardly to one's self *soothingly* ; and outward to the man each time you pass him *impressively*.)

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Now, where are we? Oh, it is a wet day, and everyone lost in a smoke cloud, playing nap, at six counters a penny. We condense the description of that wet day and simply say, the day passed pleasantly.

Another Wet Day.

Next morning, about seven, Burley awoke, and wiping the condensation off the window with the little red curtain—for which use he probably imagined it was intended, for it was his invariable custom—he looked out. Then he wiped again to make sure; then in stentorian tones yelled out:

“Hi! you lazy beggars, wake up and look at the rain! My word, just look at it!”

Weedy sat up so suddenly that he rammed the ceiling with his curly head, for he occupied top berth.

He said a rude word—for him—and rubbed the part affected.

Then Linear growled out, only partially awake:

“W’a’s er marrer?” and fell asleep again.

Stuggy had to be prodded in the ribs with a length of fishing rod before he deigned to open his eyes, and then he laid and sucked his lips and blinked like an owl before he understood what was being said to him.

It is supposed that he is descended from one of the seven sleepers of Ephesus; but Linear says if such is a fact, he must have descended in about three jumps, for he has not yet had time to shake off his drowsiness.

“Say, boys,” came from Burley, “let’s have breakfast at nine, and take the meantime out in snoozing.”

“Agreed;” and soon all but Weedy were snoring like a pen of prize porkers.

Weedy read. Only for a little time.

Weedy thought. For some time.

"How can I take it out of these beggars a bit," he soliloquised. "I owe them one apiece all round."

Then alighting from his berth he quietly lighted some paper, and placing it upon a biscuit box lid in the store cupboard, between the cabin and forepeak, and leading into the latter by a little door, clambered quietly into bed again.

The paper set up a dense smoke, and quickly woke up Chuckle, who seeing the smoke at once yelled:

"Fire! Fire!" at the top of his voice.

Even Stuggy of Ephesus awoke at his cries.

"Tumble out! Tumble out!" yelled Weedy, "the ship is on fire."

"Where? where?" cried the others in chorus.

"Here, sir, in the peak," replied the drowsy Chuckle.

Out tumbled the gigantic Burley, in his scant attire, into the pelting rain, followed by the lengthy Linear and sinewy Stuggy. Along the deck they ran to the forepeak hatch, the lid of which Burley impetuously wrenched off, and then vainly and valiantly endeavoured to descend amid the smoke which ascended through the opening.

His body was too big for the aperture, which he completely filled, and his foot slipping from the solitary step inside, there he hung with his legs dangling in the forepeak, and his body looming large above the hatch, like a cork in a champagne bottle.

The rain descended merrily on the pyjama-clad crew.

Stuggy and Linear helped Burley from his trap, and the former popped down to see what was amiss.

Smoke now commenced to pour afresh into the peak from the store cupboard (Weedy had replenished the first paper with some brown paper, and it went famously), and Stuggy handed out pails to those on deck with :

“Look sharp, it’s something caught fire in the cupboard.”

A couple of pails of water were dashed in, and the smoke ceased, the gallant trio had doused the fire.

Back they trooped to the cabin, wet through, congratulating themselves on their promptness and prowess, conscious that they had performed a noble deed.

And there lay Weedy fast asleep.

“Great Scott, man! Why, whatever are you thinking about? Why, we’ve had the ship afire; and had we not rushed to the rescue in time we might have been smothered in our beds.”

“Oh!” said the wily Weedy innocently, blinking as he added, “what fun you’ve had, why didn’t you wake me?”

Then the three heroes snorted in their pride and chuckled over their alertness, as they took off their soaking pyjamas and mopped their limbs.

And Weedy chuckled too, but he did his chuckling silently. Weedy was afraid to divulge his secret just then, as he was but a small man, and what is a shrimp among three giants? but when the cruise was over he

chuckled louder than any of the others. Being the smallest of the party, like Brer Rabbit, he had to lay low, till one day during a little supper at his house, he showed his friends fancy pictures in pen and ink of certain pyjama-clad amateur firemen, and capped it with another in which he himself, like a modern Guy Fawkes, was just committing the arson.

MORAL :

“HE LAUGHS LOUDEST WHO LAUGHS LAST.”

The day continued wet, that was the second soaking day, and they had had quite sufficient of cards on the previous day, so after breakfast Burley proposed playing that universal game “Coddam.” Nothing is required in this game but eight fists and a button; and anyone but slightly acquainted with the game can imagine what a fund of merriment it contains, when the button is in the hands of four lively fellows.

In England it is a soldier’s game, but in America it is the chief gambling game among the noble Redmen, and horses, wigwams, robes, and even wives are gambled away simply by the aid of a tiny stone or chip of bone or wood. It is simpler than cards, but quite as engrossing.

It is a capital game on a yacht for a wet day, and our heroes played it with varying success for a long time, till somehow it came about that Burley bantered Weedy concerning some verses he had concocted,

whereupon the latter blushed and retorted that the former could not write a couple of decent verses if his life depended upon the effort.

Well, in the end, just as in real warfare, the others were dragged into it, until it was agreed that each man should have an hour in which to write some verses on any subject he chose, and that the said verses should be read aloud, no one but the writer knowing who wrote them. And that the writer of those adjudged the best verses should receive a garland of the finest procurable wild flowers—be adjudged poet laureate of the good ship "Pillbox," and in addition should receive from each of the unsuccessful competitors eighteenpence lawful coin of the realm, to be expended in a bottle of the finest whisky procurable; the said alcohol to be for the joint benefit and refreshment of the whole ship's crew.

Down sat the poetic innocents at the appointed time to commence their mental task, and very funny they looked while in the throes of composition.

Burley the ponderous, sat bolt upright on his cushioned locker, and fanning himself with his paper, looked upward to the fly-spotted ceiling with a happy smile on his rubicund countenance, as if he were in direct telepathic communication with one of the Muses, Calliope in particular

He made a sweet picture.

Weedy of the lank hair, supposedly *the* poet of the party, sat on an upturned pail in the stern-sheets, with

his elbows on his knees, and his fists stuck into his sunburnt cheeks; his corduroy forehead was bent over his dark eyes, which were fixed on a particular pattern on the kamptulicon which covered the well.

He held his pencil between his teeth and looked more like a condemned criminal than a follower of Tennyson.

Linear gathered up his long legs and sat on them *à la Turc*, a drawing board on his knees forming a desk for writing upon. He smoked a little, holding his head on one side and occasionally closing his right eye; this was for inspiration. Anon he laid aside his pipe and puckered up both lips and forehead and whistled, no doubt thinking that if he wooed the goddess of music, the goddess of poetry would arrive to see what was the matter. Then as he whistled he would nod his head vigorously to get the rhythm of his lines, till he put one in mind of a little Chinese mandarin with a movable, jerky neck, such as one sees in shop windows; or perhaps he might be more graphically described as a young blackbird sitting on a twig after swallowing its first live worm, and wondering what would happen next.

Stuggy was evidently ill at ease; he tapped his pencil upon his paper about five hundred times and looked vacantly at his comrades time after time before he put a word on paper. Then he flew at it, and put down a whole line before coming to a sudden stop. Then he pulled his ear and stroked his nose with his disengaged hand, rubbed his chin, curled his moustache, and

finally flew at his paper to write another line. He appeared to get half through it before he found the last word would not rhyme with the previous line, so crossed it out with a dash, and then sat grinning at it like a hyena.

Had any stranger looked in he would have imagined himself an intrusive visitor to a gallery of waxwork figures doing a trial trip under new clockwork. It was just lovely.

In due time came the reading of the poetic efforts ; the award of the poetic wreath and ceremony of placing the chaplet on the victor's brow being postponed till a more fitting day, as dabby, wet garlands are not nice.

Burley's verses were ponderous like himself, and contained much war and blood and other nasty violent things, but they were not up to the standard of a poet laureate.

He called his an "Epic on Khartoum," and only a few lines can be given here for fear the blood with which it reeks may have a sickening effect upon the reader.

* * * * *

The Dervish horde in bold array,
 Rushed onward to the maxim ;
 The very steed excited grew,
 Just like the man who backs him.

* * *

The blood in gurgling ruddy stream
Ran down to meet the Nile ;
The foe in trenches hast'ly made,
Were heaved in pile on pile,
In years to come the fallereen
Will find its richish sile, &c., &c.

All agreed that in the rough the effort was tolerable, but although there was considerable vigour in it, it lacked polish. Or, as one said, "there is plenty of black" in it, but the polish on it would fall far short of that of Day and Martin, which would shine where he would flicker and die out.

Agreed, therefore, that being second to Day and Martin, he could not pretend to the laureateship.

Weedy's effort came next, and was entitled :

"ODE TO A WATER BEETLE."

This was so watery and washy that by general acclamation it was voted "no go." It rhymed very fairly, and its rhythm was preserved ; but it was all "glimmer" and "shimmer," and "glint" and "tint." It was all legs and wings, and lacking body, consequently had no backbone. We refrain from giving even a sample, as the reader has done nothing to us that he should be made to feel sad for a whole miserable hour after reading Weedy's "Wayward Beetle," as the effort was relabelled.

Agreed, that the person who wrote these washy verses should have the choice of swallowing either

three lively water beetles, or one copy of his own composition.

Stuggy's tribute was next taken in hand, but alas, versification was a dead letter with him. He had striven and fought his best, but he stuck fast about every other line. As he said, it would have been all right if he could have thought of rhymes to his words. His ideas were excellent, but would not rhyme, although they had plenty of reason in them.

It made funny reading—the whole six verses (or rather parts of six verses, for three lines and a “bittock” was all he ever attained) looking much like a dog running on three legs, or, as Burley put it, like an old soldier with two arms, one leg, and a stump.

Here we go.

I.

As down the Vale of Life I stray,
I meet with many rude reverses,
I'm here to-day, to-morrow gone,
I'm—————!

II.

But what care I though Fortune frown,
Or fate should threaten to shipwreck me,
To-morrow gone, I'm here to-day,
I'm—————!

There was no title to this effusion, so what it was all about no one could infer. The poet called it a “Sentimental Song;” but after looking carefully through it no sentiment could be discovered by the judges, who

surmised that the sentiment in looking for the sense had slipped through the bottom and lost itself.

Burley said he thought that last line a "caulker," whatever that may be, the other members spelled it "corker," for it completely bottled up the embarrassed poet.

Agreed, that the writer had no felonious intent when he undertook the herculean task before him of filching rhymes from his brain. That he had made the attempt was proved by the evidence before the court. His dastardly attempt, luckily for himself and those present, had failed, and under the circumstances, he would be fined one bottle of Old Scotch for having made an ass of a member of the "Pillbox."

Prisoner, with his naturally hard demeanour, joined heartily in laughter with the judges, who each begged leave to copy the "poem" for framing.

Linear's versification came last, and its author informed the company that, as it was founded on fact, he hoped they would remember that such being the case he had not so much freedom of thought as his compeers.

As it was adjudged the best production we give it in extenso.

YE FYSHERMAN HYS LUCKE.

Ye fysherman proposeth oft
Ye scaley onnes to lure;
But higher power disposeth
When he feeleth too cock-sure.

One livelong morn a fisher wrought
With spayde, sande-wormes to digge,
Till down his cheekes ye swat did poure
In droppès round and bigge.

Ye wormes lay deep; ye sande was wette;
And ere he filled his canne,
His back did ache, and eke his arme;
He was a wearie manne.

His onlie sonne a ladde of tenne,
With grimaces and squirmes,
Did fill ye canne with fyshes foode,
A *Diet* of (lug) *Wormes*.

Ye canne was fylled; they wended home,
Their homely meal to share.
Syne came the eve, they shoreward rove,
And each a line did beare.

With care their hooke-line they unrolled,
The barbèd hooks were manney,
Some threescore, and I'm fain to say,
A dozen more if anney.

Ye rosie sun dipped him a-downe
Into ye Western Sea,
Ere all was fit to bait ye hookes,
Ye hookes quite seventie.

"Now bring ye bait, my littel sonne,"
Ye fysher gailie cried.
"Aye, that will I from out ye canne,"
Ye littel sonne replied.

Then faste he ranne unto ye cliffe,
To where ye canne was hyd.
"Great Scott," cried he, with staring eyes,
"Ye canne has lost its lydd."

"Oh, fader myne ! thys canne of tinne
Has fallen upon its syde :
Ye worms have bunked I feare me much,
And are washèd out with ye tyde.

Now fyshers are at tymes profane,
And thys began to sweare ;
Ye blushing sun in haste did dyp,
Cerulean grew ye aire.

Ye fysherman returned alone ;
Ye lad, ah ! where was he ?
On shore strayed he tyll rose ye moone,
Then home in feare went he.

At night's deepe noone, while fader slept
Ye sleep ye wearie seekes,
Ye lad crept home with silent feet,
And rope coiled in his breeks.

MORAL.

When partners with a fysherman,
Who "something dreadful" sweares,
See that ye baite is safely stowed,
Or that soft shoes he weares.

The Anchoring of Noah's Ark.

Burley and Linear are inordinately fond of eels, so one night they took the trouble to bait a line of about

fifty hooks. This they coiled carefully in the stern of the dinghy, and pulled away on to Barton Broad. The "Pillbox" was at the time lying just by Irstead Church in a dyke leading to Catfield.

They arrived at their shooting place just in the gloaming, and while Burley pulled, Linear paid the line carefully over the stern. A solitary-looking cork from a beer bottle was all that marked one end of the line, the cork being attached to the end of the main line by means of a bit of waxed thread. This light ligature gave buoyancy to the cork, and was calculated to avoid suspicion.

The practised eye of a marshman would notice anything, whether cork, wood, or other material, did it not bob to the rise and fall of every little wavelet, and his shallow little reed-boat would be at once stopped and the object examined.

All well; the dinghy returned to the yacht.

In the morning, about seven o'clock, Burley and Linear took the dinghy and went to haul their eel line, and having taken careful bearings they soon picked up the cork and began wistfully to haul in, making guesses as to the number of eels they would astonish their friends with.

But guessing the number of fish on a line, is very much like counting one's chickens before they are hatched, as they soon found. Linear hauled, and as each hook appeared, ejaculated thusly :

"Nothing—nothing—no—I'm blessed, not one—no

—nothing—and all the bait gone—no—hallo—no, only weed—hello, here comes a mussel—no, well just look at that, it's a potato! How the dickens could that have hooked itself? Nothing—no—no—Oh! I say, look here now, here's another murphy! We've been had, old man, potatoes do not generally sink and transfix themselves on hooks, do they?"

Burley agreed that such suicidal tendencies on the part of the common or garden spud was most unusual.

They had been done—done brown!

Chuckle was taken into council. He was a Barton man ("Gipsy Bartoners" they call them, from so many tawny-skinned men residing in the village), and at once suggested an old man living near the broad as being the purloiner of the eels.

"Thet's old Noah's work, sure's I'm a-standin' in tew shues; jest yew leave it ter me ter find out. He's a jannock ole faller, and I know him rite well."

Chuckle had leave to visit Noah, and was gone all the morning, Stuggy taking his duty as cook. And a nice mess he made of it as usual. What an ass of a cook he proved may be gathered from the fact that he made a suet pudding and actually baked it without—well, hear what happened.

Burley knew there was something wrong with that pudding directly he put his knife on it to cut it. It turned the edge of the blade and crippled his wrist as he struggled to remove a chunk for each diner.

Of course each looked hard at it, tried to get his

fork into it, sniffed it, and even nibbled it, and finding it like leather, two of them blurted out together, "Kamptulicon!"

The floor was inspected, but no "kamptulicon" was missing.

"What did you put in it, Stuggy?"

Stuggy began to go through the ingredients, and then suddenly began to blush and stammer. He remembered something.

He flew to the forepeak, accompanied by Linear, and there calmly reposing in a basin with a saucer coverlet was *the suet*! The murder was out.

* * * *

Chuckle returned in due course, his face full of glee, and with the information that he had "tapped the ole beggar and got it all out of him."

Old Noah had watched the laying of the line from a reed-rand, and knowing that yachtsmen, as a rule, are not very early birds, had come along in his reed-boat at four o'clock and taken off half a stone of nice eels and planted the two potatoes on the hooks.

Chuckle continued:

"Ole Noah, he say, what's the user growin' old ef yer don't grow artful tew? I'm a-eat up so with the rheumatiz that I can't set lines like I used to, but when a parcel o' fools cum and set a 'tret' right under a ole man's nose wat like eels, why, wot's he ter du but go

and pick up wat he can ha' for the gathering. An' there wor a nice mess too."

"And," said Chuckle, "there *wor* some good 'uns among 'em."

How could they circumvent Old Noah and have their revenge was the question.

To take a fellow's eels and then call him a fool is adding insult to injury; so they thirsted for revenge and deliberated how to obtain it.

Scheme after scheme was concocted by which they might get level with the old sinner.

"Let us frighten him after he has got to bed," said one.

"Put his pig into his boat and set it adrift," was suggested by another.

"'Tice him on the broad in his ole boat and then shove the cork out and let him swim ashore," interpolated Chuckle.

This was voted much too drastic—Old Noah without the succour of his ark might be drowned.

At length Linear proposed a plan by which the old fellow might be anchored on the broad about dusk when there were very few people about.

The long one's plan was to sink a sack of stones at a convenient place in the broad—somewhere up the little-used arm towards Neatishead. To this was to be attached a length of rope sufficient to reach nearly to the surface of the water, and on the end of it a strong iron hook was to be bent. This hook was to be buoyed so as to float eighteen inches beneath the surface.

That being done one of the conspirators was to go to the old man's boat while he was at dinner, turn her up and bore a hole through the keel for the hook to go in. The rest was to be left to Linear.

The sack was sunk, the hook buoyed, and the hole bored successfully; nothing remained but to await the old man's arrival on the scene.

Two hours passed before Old Noah was seen paddling in that calm, noiseless manner peculiar to those water dogs, the marshmen of Broadland.

Burley and Linear were at once at work near the sack, making believe that they had dropped something overboard, and as Noah came along were vigorously probing the depths with a long mooring pole.

The old fellow saw them and altered his course, and came nearer.

"What ha' yer lost sommat overboard?" he inquired.

"Yes," Burley replied, "our whole kit in a big bag. It went off the stern just about here."

The old man came and hung on to their boat, and asked a hundred questions, and made several suggestions, none of which were accepted, till presently Burley sang out:

"I'm touching it, I believe; I can feel something hard."

Linear got out a scull and commenced prodding about, but the scull was hardly long enough. Off came his coat and up went his sleeves above the elbow.

Burley fiddled about with the mooring pole to take

the ancient mariner's attention, and this gave Linear an opportunity to grab the hook and pop it through the keel of Noah's ark.

Then, having had the signal "all right" conveyed by a nod and wink, Burley suddenly had an idea.

"Now I can feel the bag right here, but it is too heavy to get up on the end of a pole. How would it be if we were to go back to the yacht and get that strong iron creeper, we could then regain our kit in five minutes?"

"You won't mind stopping and mooring here for half an hour, will you?" said Linear to Noah; "just put this pole in by the side of our bag and fasten up to it."

Noah readily assented.

"Here is four o'clock and we haven't had a bite since breakfast," continued Linear, "so this trip will give us an opportunity to refresh the inner man. By the way, which do you prefer, whisky or brandy?"

"Oh, just a wee drop o' whisky, thank'ee, that'll du my rheumatiz a warld o' good; and look here, don't yew gents hurry, *I* ain't in no hurry. Ha' yer dinner comfor'ble, I'll ha' a smoke."

"Sorry I haven't a cigar to offer you, but we have plenty in the yacht. Which do you prefer, Havanna or Borneo?"

"Oh, don't yew trouble about no furrin brands, I don't trouble what 'tis, so as it don't make me sick," and the old man chuckled at his attempt at facetiousness.

"Got him on toast, by jingo!" giggled Burley when

out of hearing. "The old joker will want some grub before he puts Larranaga or Scotch into his mouth, I'm thinking."

At five o'clock the old man sat in his reed punt as quiet as a lamb, contemplating the glittering water.

So he did at six p.m., with an occasional look around ; he was a patient old patriarch, if artful.

At seven he was standing in his boat scanning the scene in the evening glow.

At eight he was struggling and tugging at the mooring pole, and through a pair of field glasses looked to be terribly excited. Indeed, Weedy said, 'he could detect a blueness in the air around the old mariner's head, caused by his cerulean language.

Night falling, a mantle of haze settled over the broad, as it usually does after a hot day, till the old man and his tribulation could be seen no longer.

Before daybreak next day the "Pillbox" returned to the Bure, so how Noah left his ark was not known, or if he left it at all. Unless someone came to his rescue, his skeleton may still be sitting there, guarding that bag of stones, for he could not swim a stroke, and he was too safely anchored to get away by any other means. To reach over the side of the reed-boat to cut the rope would have turned the ship upside down. The Innocents were revenged.

Burley next day dropped Noah a line thanking him for taking care of our eels, and *also* for taking care of our lost kit.

Father William.

While the "Pillbox" one day lay moored on the Acle side of Horning Church, a venerable old gentleman, shading himself under a big white umbrella, came down to a meadow adjoining the river. He looked a very scientific old cove, and carried a big red volume under his arm.

He made himself very comfortable on a fallen tree, selecting a part where a big branch looped out from the parent stem and gave a comfortable support to his back. Then he fixed his big sunshade in a cleft, and sat down for a good read—to study in quietness.

The Innocents looked from afar with awe. They called to mind the portraits of Huxley, Darwin, Tyndall, and a host of other great scientists, but failed to recognise the savant.

He read the book and then reflected deeply—so deeply that the Innocents would have given a trifle to learn the name of the book he was studying so assiduously.

Presently he reflected so deeply that he appeared to doze. Out came the field glasses.

"Yes," said Linear slowly, "the old boy's fast asleep, and I'll bet either of you fellows two glasses I'll go and have a look at his book without waking him."

He was taken, and off went Linear.

His approach was superb—à la Chocktaw Indian. There had not been more laughter for days than over

this episode. Had the old gent awakened just at the critical point when Linear was fingering the book, a fit would have been the result to Burley at least.

But he did not wake up, and Linear calmly sat down by the unconscious old savant, and looked the book through.

Burley said he reckoned it was on dead languages or some classic work.

Stuggy opined that science of some sort—electricity or chemistry of an advanced kind filled the tome, but Weedy felt sure it was Theology or the Drama.

Linear still sat there as the old man slumbered on.

"What a cheek!" cried Burley, "the long 'un is writing something down in the book; an answer to some problem perhaps."

At the end of a quarter of an hour Linear returned.

"What was it?" asked everyone eagerly in chorus, expecting some polysyllabic Greek or Latin title at least.

"You'd never guess," said Linear, "if you tried for a week, and yet everyone knows the book well, so I will tell you. It is 'Alice in Wonderland!' Now that just shows you should never judge people by their appearances any more than you can tell a cigar by the ornate label on the box. I think he must be a Nonconformist parson; he had just got to that lovely poem, entitled 'Father William,' so I sat down and wrote four more verses for his edification, and put them in as a book mark, so that he should not lose his place when he awoke.

These were Linear's lines :

"Thy feet they are large," the young man cried,
"Thy boots make thee hobble all day,
And the bumpy black leather is very much creased,
Now tell me the reason I pray?"

"In the days of my youth," the old fellow replied,
"With port wine I'd many a bout,
And now in my dotage I'm fain to confess,
I'm a martyr to bunions and gout."

"But what makes you smile in that Cheshire cat style,
And turn somersaults at the door,
And balance that eel on the tip of your nose,
And stand on your head on the floor?"

"Alas!" cried old William with giggling glee,
"With a baboon's my brain is a match,
And I think if I lived in the place that I should,
My address would be 'Will, Colney Hatch.'"

When the old fraud woke up half an hour after, he caught sight of the verses, and presumably of the "Pillboxers," for their roars might have been heard a mile away over water. He clenched his fist, slammed his umbrella together, and shook it at the grinning Innocents before departing in great dudgeon.

Our Man "Chuckle."

The navigator of the "Pillbox" was a typical Broadlander, full of quaint sayings and curious ideas, a rival

in humour to the Dublin Jarvey, between whom there is something in common in the way of navigation ; one navigates a jaunting car and the other a wherry, both rubbing shoulders with all sorts and conditions of men.

Chuckle chewed and smoked from "roseate morn till dewy eve," and this he thought of when Burley asked him one day :

"How would you like to go out to Central Africa among the cannibals?"

"Wot are them?" he asked, "some sort 'er dragon kindly?"

When informed that they were blacks who ate all the people they could kill, he remarked :

"If I go out they 'ont touch me I know, I chow 'bacca 'nuff to kill a score on 'em. Why, they'd never make me flavourable 'nuff ter eat, onless they kivered me all over an inch thick with kiann papper! and even then they'd find me as tough as a bit of old witlather or the davvel's hide on a frosty mornin'!"

On being asked if a certain person drank heavily, he replied :

"Drink, maaster? He du get suffen down. A pint 'ont wet one eye wi' him, and a quart don't fill him up. He allus want a drop in a pail, about up to the thud heup! and *then* he say he feel dry!"

One day Weedy tore his jacket on an outstanding nail, and remarked that it did not matter, it was a very old garment and the cloth rotten. Chuckle saw the accident and heard the remark, and Sam Weller-like rejoined :

"Ah! that's wot the old woman say when she clawed her old man by the ears, 'Rotten will rend!'"

Chuckle informed the Innocents one day when they were speaking of strange deaths that he "know'd of tew," and they certainly were both curious and out of the common.

A schoolfellow of his sickened, and grew worse daily, having most intense pains in his head. Several doctors saw him, and it was surmised that pressure or a growth on the brain might be the cause, but despite their attention the boy died.

An inquest was held, and the doctor who made the post-mortem declared that death resulted from a common horse bean, which had at some period been thrust into the cavity of the boy's ear, and with the warmth and moisture therein had sprouted, giving the boy excruciating pain and causing his death.

Chuckle's father, too, met his death in a very simple manner—he was killed by a fly, a death assigned rightly or wrongly to one of the early Popes, who was choked by a fly while taking a goblet of wine. Only Chuckle's father was not killed in that way. He was standing in the cockpit of his wherry one very hot day, with his hand on the tiller, when a fly settled on his bare arm and bit him. Such a slight occurrence was taken no notice of, but a little red puncture caused irritation, he rubbed the place, blood-poisoning supervened, and in a few days he was a dead man.

Chuckle obtained leave one day to visit his sweet-

heart at Stalham. It was ludicrous to see him what he termed "kinder fake hisself up a bit." After an elaborate shave and wash and a lengthy hair-coombing, helped by a liberal allowance of pork lard, he dived into the peak, and presently, instead of appearing as the nautical man with dungaree trousers, guernsey, and peaked cap, he appeared *à la* Duc de Pompadour.

He had donned a pair of tight blue trousers, and a light coat and waistcoat. A blazing red tie surrounded a stand-up collar, and a brown bowler "topped him off."

Burley nearly had a fit, while Linear doubled up over the great iron tiller when Chuckle appeared; and the others came rushing out to see what was amiss. They too caught the infection and were convulsed, but this did not disconcert Chuckle a morsel, he begged a cigar, and with it stuck in his mouth at an angle which brought it into close propinquity with his nose, strutted up and down the bank for the Innocents' edification, shooting out his cuffs, with brass links, till they nearly covered his hands. He smacked his leg with a natty little walking stick, and enjoyed the fun quite as much as the four spectators, whose ribs ached with laughing.

"Eh!" said Chuckle knowingly, "kinder knock spots off some o' them there London dooks, eh?" and off he trudged to see his innamorato.

The gay young spark was "a goin' arter" a widow turned forty and nearly old enough to be his mother.

More laughter when he returned, for he brought with him a love token from his fair one.

"She would ha' me teake it, and it's a rale beauter tu," said he, triumphantly exhibiting an enormous red cabbage, "I allus was fond er *frute*, and here's summat to set yer toshes inter, and no mistake."

Celebrities Meet.

How is it that newspaper reporters have such a sinful way of exaggerating everything they write about? Can it be that they are all the sons of anglers? It is devotedly to be hoped that it is not so, else with a little practise their exaggerating might come dangerously near the almost invisible line which divides it from actual lying.

Possibly a little exaggeration may give interest to the reader, picturesqueness to the literary style, and even a little flattering unction to the soul of the scribe, who fancies he sees things in a superior and different light to his fellow mortals.

When two celebrities meet the journalist usually so magnifies them, their surroundings, and their little congratulatory speeches, that one would imagine the meeting to be spread over a fortnight at least.

Look what piles have been written about the meeting of Wellington and Blücher on the field of Waterloo. Reams of it; loads of it; and yet modern historians and writers say they never met on the battlefield at all!

See what columns were written concerning the meeting of Livingstone and Stanley, to say nothing of the meeting of Sayers and Heenan!

A certain literary celebrity was staying at Horning Ferry Inn one summer when another ditto ditto accidentally took it into his head to take a peep at the beauties of the Bure, not knowing of the presence at the Ferry of the first.

One day the first, whom we will call O——, strolled along the river bank to see if he could get a rise at some trout, which he had been assured had been seen at a certain spot. He had tried and failed; had taken off his fly and was trying for perch with lobworms, with a like abortive result, when the shadow of someone strolling along the bank behind him was cast upon the water before him.

Now O—— was down for quietness, and did not want to talk to anyone; he simply wanted to drone and drowse in the sunshine till lunch-time, fish or no fish.

"Good morning!" came from the man casting the shadow, and whom we will call Z——, "have you caught anything worth inspection? If so, I guess I'd like to cast my eyes on it, or them, if you've no objection."

"Certainly," said O—— off-handedly, "they're in that tin box on my waterproof," jerking his thumb over his arm as much as to hint "don't bother me."

The man with the tousled moustache picked up the little box and opened the lid.

"Worms," he muttered to himself; then aloud:

"Guess, stranger, you've landed some beauties, but you hardly required a rod for a job like that. I never knew anyone *angle* for anything of this sort before. Anyway, may I ask how you take them—fried or biled?"

O—— did not even look at his interlocutor, whom he took by his twang to be an American tourist who had heard of our lagoons, and was sampling them. He merely replied frigidly:

"We don't eat them in England, we merely fish with them."

"Oh, I see," replied the visitor, "your customs appear different to ours; *we* bile 'em down and make astonishing nice aspic jelly of them; according to Cocker they are extremely fattening."

"Cocker was no doubt a clever man, but probably understood as little of worms as our great Johnson of angling," rapped out O—— testily.

"I guess," remarked Z——, "that your Johnson was poor pudding to our great lexicographer Cocker!"

"And yet," said O——, "you must allow that he gave a capital definition of the word '*angle*.'"

"Maybe," said Z——, "he did, but I can't say I ever heard it, perhaps you will favour me with it?"

O——, fumbling in his pocket, remarked:

"It was a somewhat rude definition, but if you will take it as *he* set it down, and without any thought of insinuation on my part, I will tell you, if you will kindly hold my rod a moment."

Z—— took the rod, remarking :

“Guess I’m not so durned thin-skinned as to set my hump at anything a fossil dictionary writer could say to hurt my well-seasoned feelings. Fire away, stranger, let’s have it right plump and square!”

O—— explained :

“The definition is this: hold the rod nicely over the water, and you will catch the meaning better—‘Angle’—a rod with a worm at one end and a fool at the other!”

“Done! done right brown, and plenty of crackling,” roared Z——, laughing loudly. “But look here, old hoss, as we say down to home, for goodness’ sake resume your rod, you look so out of character without it.”

O—— squirmed a bit, but seeing that he had met his match, joined in laughing too, which awoke a huge dog dozing in the shade of a wild currant-bush.

“Shades of Washington! whatever is that?” exclaimed Z——, quitting laughter and assuming a face of horror, as he fixed his eyes on the dog.

“Oh, only my faithful companion, my beautiful tyke.”

“But why do you put that hideous mask on him? I thought at first glance I must have had a return attack of the jim-jams.”

“Mask! he has no mask on, that is his own real countenance, I can assure you, and beautiful at that.”

“Wall! if that’s so, all I can say is such a countenance

should be embalmed and put in a glass case, or the whole animal stuffed for fear the hideous features should be lost to future dealers in horrors. Take my advice and have him *petrified* at once for fear his beauty should fade. The sight of him makes me feel dry, what is his name?" Looking on his collar—"Why—it's *Sims*, I ought to know you?"

"Yes! and *mark* me," said O——, "we *twain* should know each other. Let us get back and gargle to our future friendship, Dr. Johnson and my bully bull-dog notwithstanding."

They marched off arm in arm.

Now that is the roundabout method that might be employed by a journalist in writing of the meeting—possible, but unlikely—but still dished up in a very spicy manner.

What really took place was prosaically this:

S—— down at the Ferry for a week's end change, finds Twain is also a visitor for a few days.

Mark sitting by the bowling-green watching the game is asked to "make one" by S——.

"May I ask you to be my partner in the next game, just to while away an hour, we are merely playing for drinks?"

"Well, I don't mind if you'll allow me to pay, for you'll find me an arrant duffer, I'll promise you."

"Oh! never mind, you will be in good company in that respect."

"Mr. Smith and I," says the landlord, "against Mr.

G. R. Sims and 'Mr. Mark Twain,' eh? well, it's lucky the weapons are bowls instead of pens!"

The deed was done, the celebrities had met. Hands were shaken, and a long friendship was begun.

Only a dozen lines are filled instead of a couple of columns. Whence then come the shekels for the writer? Shekels and brevity are strangers. Therefore bring forth the biggest pair of bellows, and in the days of the whopping strawberry and wily sea serpent, let journalism flourish—wind is cheap.

Just as the poet says, "In spring the young man lightly turns to thoughts of love"—some of them turn that way all the year round. So in summer the young man turns to thoughts of fun, at least the Innocents found it so, for never a day or an opportunity for fun was missed.

Elaborate schemes for practical jokes were laid, and sometimes they went off with a bang; while at other times, like an old flint lock, they gave a fizz, and nothing more—no merry explosion followed—the charge was damp.

Of course many ancient devices were tried on Weedy with success, for like the laughing marshlands around, he was green and fenceless.

Did they not accuse him of having a dirty face, and send him to wash, in the dark, under the stern-sheet awning? And did they not place a cake of blacking for him instead of a cake of soap? Of course they did. Ancient but efficacious. And did not he in re-

venge put a "bread plug" in the bottom of the dinghy and push off his friends without providing them with oars? Equally of course.

Yes, sugar took the place of salt on the table, and meat was sugared and coffee was salted; boots had bread crammed into the toes; pipe-stems were stopped, and cigars threaded with an obnoxious hair, and a thousand and one pranks played worthy of the veriest schoolboy. Yet with good comradeship, health, and beautiful weather, the Innocents enjoyed perhaps the happiest holiday of their lives.

CHAPTER IV.

A FISHING YARN OF HICKLING.

How strange, yet how true, that brothers, notwithstanding an innate love one for the other, are often given to jangling or bickering upon small points.

They know that the main facts of a certain thing on the *tapis* are correct, yet for some occult reason they will find and take different views, not because there is much difference in their premises, but simply because *they are brothers!*

This peculiar phase of brotherhood does not cease with boyhood, but frequently keeps pace with their growth. Possibly each considers his intelligence equal to the others, and Dick, who is three years the senior, wants to be leader, while Tom, the minor, wishes to let his brother see that he too knows a little.

Anyway there is an innate cussedness that leads those of the same blood to "argue for the sake of arguing."

S—— and E—— were brothers, and naturally had their differences of opinion. Each thought himself a better angler than the other, and at last, after much

verbal conflict, not unaccompanied with stray shots of sarcasm, they agreed not to fight it out, but fish it out.

Each was to chose a friend, and on a set day drive over to Hickling, and from boats have a regular four hours' fishing match.

S—— chose Walter Sandall of Walcot, who was better perhaps in a wrestling bout, or when telling a funny story, than as an angler.

E—— chose Ben Slipper of Hasbro' Hall, one of those dashing squires who is good for anything in the way of sport, and will get up at any time or go anywhere to enjoy it.

Alas! both good fellows lie in untimely graves!

Well, one bright September morning in 1876, the merry party drove over to Hickling Staithe, and after the usual and indispensable refreshment at the Pleasure-Boat, then kept by that garrulous old wherryman Cooke, the two pairs of contestants entered their boats and pulled for their respective angling stations, each party having their own choice of place.

S—— and Sandall chose the Little Pleasure Hill, a crescent-shaped belt of reeds, as their locale, while E—— and Slipper went farther afield—to Whiteslea.

Half-past ten was the hour set for commencing, and punctual to time the contest commenced. Three-quarters of a mile apart, the two boats were not within sight of each other, great reed-rands intervening, and it was left to the honour of each party to angle in a fair and sportsmanlike manner.

E—— and his companion did all they knew to woo victory, but knowing the Little Pleasure Hill to be a grand spot for rudd, were somewhat afraid that the arrival of a shoal of half to three-quarter pounders might give the palm to their friends.

Besides the honour of winning the contest, a dinner was to be eaten by the four at the expense of the loser, and at that very moment they could almost sniff the brace of ducks being cooked by Hannah, the daughter of host Cooke.

As experts with the rod and line there was probably little to chose between the two parties; but it must be owned that E—— and Slipper were somewhat non-plussed at losing the toss for position, and finding their opponents select the very spot they would themselves have chosen, and visions of the big rudd that haunt the Pleasure Hill *would* force themselves upon them as they plied their rods; beside which, S—— and Sandall were to try a most luring scent on their bait, of which they had provided themselves with an ample supply, and made much fuss.

At half-past two lines were reeled up, and on counting their take E—— and Slipper found they had taken 115 fish, big and little. They looked at each other with doubt upon their faces.

“Five-and-thirty pounds,” said E——, as he hung the net containing the take on his steelyard. “What chance do we stand, do you think?”

“Oh! thirty-five pounds is not to be sneezed at, and

if those plaguy rudd have not visited them, we may pull it off after all. Still, another twenty pounds would have given us more confidence; but up mooring poles and let us pick them up on our way back; they will probably wait for us."

Away they went, pulling heartily and cutting off corners, for their boat was of light draught, and the quivering reeds bowed and brushed their backs as they ran through thin places where the limpid water was only a foot deep.

On entering the broad they paused and looked round to get a glimpse of their friends at the Little Pleasure Hill, when both exclaimed together:

"Why, they are gone!"

"By Jove!" said E—— excitedly, "then they've licked us, and have gone before their time; they have got among those blessed rudd, and mark me, they will weigh up four or five stone!"

"Yes, that's about it," replied Slipper, nodding his head vigorously, "that scented rubbish of theirs has enabled them to half fill their boat with fish, and they will have a jolly big laugh at us. Let us pull to their pitch and see what kind of ground-bait they used."

They pulled to the magic crescent of reeds and peered down into the glassy green water, but could see nothing but a broken dish, surrounded by the pink bones of some animal. There were quite a number of bones, but just then the friends did not fathom their significance.

"Rats, I expect," said Slipper, referring to the skeleton remains, as he shaded his eyes so as to see more clearly into the shimmering water. "Sandall has some big old rodents in his granaries, and this is some fake of his."

"Very likely," answered E——, "and I reckon they carried some kind of ground-bait in that dish." Then glancing at the broken fragments: "It would have been lucky for us if they had dropped their dish on the road this morning; anyhow, it won't carry any more of their fishy concoctions."

And they both chuckled at the broken dish without quite knowing why.

Away went the friends, pulling straight for the staithe, grumbling at their luck and at the others' superior strategy, and wondering what that broken dish *could* have contained. That they were beaten they felt assured. The dinner they would pay for willingly, but then the laughs and jibes! They were dreadful to contemplate.

Away they pulled, eager to put an end to their suspense of several hours, but just before turning into the dyke leading to the inn they heard a medley of angry voices, followed by a heavy splash in the water, and then a great deal of puffing and snorting—for they were now close to the dyke.

Into the narrow staithe shot the boat, and there stood the burly S—— on the bank, glaring at a wild tousled head and beard sticking out of the water, the

top and bottom of a face as red as a soldier's tunic.

Sandall helped the unfortunate owner of the shock-head ashore, and the said owner slunk off vowing vengeance and shaking his great fist at S——.

"Wait yow till I get some dry duds on," he roared. "I'll come back arter yow, blarm me if I don't. See if I 'ont ——"

But a forward move by S—— caused the sodden waterman to consider retreat as his best policy.

The bellicose man was Noll Nudd—self-made custodian of the broad.

Then the murder came out, for S——, bursting into a loud roar, made a clean breast of the cause of the strange scene.

Here is just what happened.

Before leaving the staithe in the morning, S——, to make sure of a good *catch*, had bribed Nudd, with half a crown, to take his net and get about half a bushel of fish—little ones to be thrown back.

These were to be ready by two o'clock—half an hour before the match ended—and the "scent" fishermen were to come ashore about that time and add this little lot to what they had legitimately caught in the meantime.

When E—— and Slipper had faded from their view, they naturally felt themselves quite sure of victory, and uncorking their bottles of "Old Tom," as strong ale is called in Norfolk (and it *is* powerful, too), they

drank and smoked and enjoyed the *dolce far niente*, now and again being drowsily aware that one or other had hooked a fish, by noticing the point of one of the fixed rods swaying and jerking about as they reclined at their ease.

These were put into their net and preserved until they had actually landed *nine* fish.

At one o'clock, exhausted by their arduous toil and the heat of the day, they attacked a large rabbit pie which Sandall had thoughtfully provided. It contained only the prime parts of two rabbits, and—it—was *delicious!*

All they left of that pie was the bones, which were thrown overboard as they were picked, and which so mystified E—— and Slipper. The dish had slipped from Sandall's hands as he was washing it, and falling on the gunnel had demolished itself.

Being satisfied with their lunch they pulled on to the staithe, where they landed about 2.15 p.m., expecting Noll with his skep of fish to be on the look-out for them, but no Noll was there.

They hunted about for him, and inquired of various people if they had seen him, and at last a man informed them he had seen him an hour before, gloriously fuddled.

"He must be found somewhere, if only to know where he had planted that half bushel of sizable fish," said S——.

A long search resulted in Noll's being found in a hay-loft, snoring loudly on his sweet-smelling couch.

Those who found him lugged him to where S—— and Sandall were impatiently waiting, and casting anxious eyes away across the broad on the look-out for their rivals, who could not now be far off.

Noll was at once confronted by the irate S——, and on being interrogated confessed that he had swallowed the half-crown in various intoxicants.

He was very talkative, and rambled on as fast as his dazed brain and thick utterance would permit.

"Play fair, m' boy," hiccoughed Noll, "I like see gen'l'men ac' square. Noll Nudd 'ont cheat no one. Net fish! (hic). That's no sport. Anyone net fish, can't catch 'em! (hic). Bah! you're a d—— cheat, that's what c'har; so now, bor, yow know. Why, yow offer me half-crown agin. I'll——"

What he would have done in his elevated state no one knows, for S——, having had enough of the scene, gave Noll a tip backward, and the fiery orator, with a frantic grab at the unaiding air, fell souse into the water, from whence he was lugged, reeking with mud, by Sandall.

You could smell him at the other end of the village, for the mud on these broads, stagnant for centuries, would put Cologne and its forty smells to the rout in no time. Noll appeared no more till late in the evening, when he was very crestfallen and humility itself.

Perhaps, after all, Noll was more than half right in his quaint idea of right and wrong in other people, but unfortunately he did not include himself when he said

to the half-crown, "Shall I drink you or give you back?"

He admired honesty abroad, but omitted to look at home.

"All's well that ends well," and at four o'clock the four friends sat down to a couple of fine ducks, and so keen had become their appetites that when they rose there was little more left than of the rabbit pie—the bones.

The moral of this story is, that anglers ever were and ever will be desperate characters, prone to plot and intrigue, but that with all their wily machinations "wartue" *will* triumph, and that patience and integrity *will* gain a victory over sloth and rabbit pie any day, though on this occasion "wartue" had a very near squeak.

Broadland Records of Fish.

From the days of the Conqueror, Norfolk pike have been noted both for their size and flavour. The sluggish waters of the Bure, Wensum, Yare, Waveney, Ant, and Chet are full of those fish, but probably at the present day they are not so numerous as in time long since gone by.

The memoirs of the Paston family—ancient letters still extant—and the records of the Monastery of St. Benet's-at-Holme all point to large pike and perch being formerly very numerous. In the centuries gone

by, there was a much greater area of water than in the present day, and not nearly so many mouths to consume the fish. Villages now in existence, and containing several hundred inhabitants, living in neat cottages, were then represented by hamlets of daub and wattle hovels, scattered sparsely over the swampy area.

At the Abbey there was always an unlimited supply of 'perche and pyke,' or luce, as the latter was frequently termed, and still is by heralds; and when Friday came round, no matter what the time of year, a few casts of the net in the Abbey fish-pond would always result in ample "piscine gobble" for the monks.

No doubt these ponds were continually replenished from the Bure, which bounded the Abbey domain for several hundred yards.

To look back to monastic times is to look back to a very dim past as to angling—we see such times through a glass darkly, and its records may not always be reliable—we will therefore come to the nineteenth century, where a better light shines upon deeds piscatorial.

Who would think the Wensum and Yare guilty of harbouring such fish as the toothsome trout and lordly salmon?

Surely the sluggish rivers of Norfolk would be the last place for an angler to expect to find such swell fish; but that these fish did formerly haunt the East Anglian streams is an undeniable fact, and they might even now, but for the presence of factories, and possibly

a certain amount of sewage which undoubtedly finds its way into the rivers, if only in small quantities.

Early in the century, salmon and trout were occasionally taken near the New Mills, at Norwich, which were then probably shaky with old age. Once known as the New Mills they will sink to the ground in decay still *New*.

In October, 1816, a fine trout, weighing sixteen and a quarter pounds, was taken from the Mill sluices. It was in poor condition, and measured thirty-seven inches in length.

To show that this was not a solitary instance, only three days after, another one was caught—a monster, weighing twenty-seven pounds, and measuring forty-one inches in length.

Exactly twelve months later there is a record of a fine male salmon-trout being taken from the Wensum, in the vicinity of Norwich, which was forty inches long, and weighed twenty-one pounds.

In February, 1819, was caught a salmon, measuring forty-eight inches long and weighing thirty-three pounds. Its girth is given as twenty-three inches. The notice adds: "These fish are frequently taken at the same place."

It must be noted that the New Mills span the river at Norwich, beyond which the fish cannot ascend, consequently, the miller with an eye to business, would watch his mill-dam for members of the salmon tribe, whether trout or "My lord" himself.

A few ordinary lake trout have been caught in the Bure, near Acle, during the past twenty years, and it is very probable that if trout fry were turned into the river in the neighbourhood of, say, Aylsham, they would thrive, and gradually find their way from lock to lock into the more open river below Coltishall, and from thence into the open broads.

Two caught on a spoonbait some years since may be seen in the bar parlour of the inn joining Acle bridge. They were probably from three to four pounds weight each. They are badly stuffed, and the strange contour lines of their backs would suggest a close kinship with the camel tribe, or they may be a new variety—*Salmo humpiana*!

Black bass have been tried in these waters, and now and again one surprises an angler who shows it around, imagining he has captured some antediluvian fish that has escaped classification by British piscatorial savants.

Often the question is asked: "What is the weight of the largest pike ever caught in Broadland?" This gives the oldest inhabitant, and indeed the whole angling fraternity, a noble chance to chip into print with some startlers; we will not call them harsher names, not even the elaborate "mendacious exaggerations."

Where is the angler of any standing who has *not* caught a twenty-pound pike?

Where, indeed! He would be an unticketed curiosity. Still, there *may* be an exceptionally truthful

angler who has the temerity to say such a fish has not fallen to his wiliness.

But wait!

Where is the angler of any pretensions to the art, who will not swear that he has hooked a fish weighing at least twenty pounds? *only*—weakness of tackle caused the brute to break away.

Such an angler has yet to be found, and when he is, a subscription should be set afoot to raise funds for the purchase of a suit of pike-skin armour wherewith to protect the hero from the assaults and scoffs of his more enterprising brethren of the rod.

Oh! ye twenty-pounders! what lies have been told in thy name! Yea, mole-hills have seemed beacons, and hills have grown to mountains—while two runs during a day have turned two mountains into whole Himalayas or Andes.

Great *Esox lucius*, thou art indeed a whopper!

Seriously: twenty-pounders *are* occasionally caught in Norfolk public waters, but during any season they might be counted on the fingers of one hand, without the thumb being brought into requisition.

Over 400 pike were taken in the Waveney a few years back during a single month (February), within three miles of Beccles, but the largest of the whole army was a bare sixteen pounds.

Still, anything over a dozen pounds is a very handsome fellow, and well worthy of the sportsman's skill in the taking. A fifteen-pound pike would be about

thirty-six inches in length, and would give the lucky captor as much pleasure as the finding of a fifteen-guinea watch—yet it would not be worth a tenth of the value; *but* he has caught a “gret ’un,” and will, with a little time and perseverance, persuade himself that it weighed “well over twenty.”

In 1890, old Watts, of Barton, was crossing the broad when he saw the snout of a large pike peeping from between some vegetation. He balanced his quant *à la* assegai and pierced its head, killing the monster instantly. Result, twenty-two and three-quarter pounds of fish for dinner.

The winter of 1889-90 was very severe all over England, and especially so in Norfolk, where the frost held for about nine or ten weeks, freezing up every broad. When the thaw came many fine pike were taken out dead from Ormesby, Rollesby, and Filby. Among those weighed were quite a number between seventeen and twenty pounds, two over twenty-one pounds, and one well over twenty-four pounds. This was picked up by Sam Richmond, son of the landlord of the Sportsman’s Arms.

There is not the slightest doubt that the old records of thirty-pound pike taken during monastic, and even more recent times, are quite authentic, because during the present century such fish *have* been captured, and their weights duly taken and guaranteed by reliable persons (non-anglers and J.P.’s).

Here are a few instances of authentic pike.

Mr. English, near Norwich, took a pike of twenty-four and three-quarter pounds on November 27th, 1883.

On April 21st, 1882, Mr. F. Johnson, while spinning, captured a very fine fish at Euston Hall, which weighed twenty-eight and a half pounds.

On February 24th, 1878, the efforts of Mr. Thorn were rewarded, whilst fishing near Norwich, by his landing a pike which scaled no less than twenty-nine pounds. This feat was performed with snap-tackle.

Each of the above anglers thus far exceeded the hopes of all fishermen—they had crossed the angler's Rubicon, the twenty pound line, and were no doubt duly and warrantably elated; but there are at least three others who have tasted the joys of the monkish mediæval anglers, and have actually landed *thirty pounders!* Just think of it, brothers of the bending rod and rippling stream, thirty pounds of tugging, rushing fish at one end of a rod and you at the other! It makes one tingle all over merely to *think* what the sensation of playing a thirty-pounder must be like.

On November 8th, 1890, Mr. Pank, fishing with live bait, took a pike exactly that size, and must be congratulated on his performance.

One can almost imagine him entering the abode of the taxidermist with his capture on his shoulder, and hearing him say: "Now stuff it in your very best style, and be very careful not to stretch the skin!"

If we go back to April 2nd, 1872, we find a record

of the taking of a thirty-two pound pike, but both these leviathans were eclipsed by one caught in the Bure in 1830, which measured forty-nine inches long, twenty-seven inches in girth, and weighed thirty-five pounds!

Now such a noble fellow as that could not be wasted, and accordingly a special messenger was dispatched with it to London, where Mr. H. N. Burroughs presented it to his Majesty William IV.

“Was not it a dainty dish
To set before a king,”

and what a lot of veal stuffing it would take to fill up its wac-u-um!

We know of a king* who often stuffs pike, but here the order was reversed, for we read his Majesty had the noble fish served upon his table at Windsor.

Bream in the Yare are as plentiful as pilchards on the Cornish coast, a fact well known to Norwich anglers who flock down the river to Cantley, Bramerton, Brundall, and Buckenham in crowds.

Some of the catches they make of the slimy old “bellows,” as they term them from their shape, are extraordinary. They do not weigh in by the ounce or pound, but frequently by the stone (of fourteen pounds).

Five, six, seven, and even more stones have fallen to a single angler in one day—but not every day!

* The taxidermist of Norwich.

Such catches only occur at times—*unstated* times, for unfortunately there is no “royal road” to making a bag.

Bream have to be fished for patiently, and as “all things come to him who waits,” so one day the patience of the modern Cotton is rewarded, and he staggers home, covered with perspiration and glory, his bosom swelling with pride as he dumps down three or four stone of slimy fish at the feet of his admiring spouse, or to his everlasting fame and delight, places a like weight of bream after his name in the annals of the “Tarradiddlers’ Angling Club.”

Probably the greatest take of bream during the past century was on the 12th August, 1818, at Buckenham, on the Yare, when two rods in the course of the day landed fifteen stone, or 210 lbs.

Bream, however, are not confined to the Buckenham district, as we may learn from the following particulars, culled from various reliable sources.

The summer of 1897 was a very hot one, and the takes of bream on all the broads and rivers extraordinary. It was a source of wonder that such shoals of fish should mobilize and allow themselves to be caught, for big bags were made by quite mediocre anglers, exemplifying the adage that “the biggest thingamys have the best luck.”

Here are a few details of catches during the summer of 1897.

On July 31st, a party of ten anglers, fishing from

five boats, each with one rod, took 280 lbs. of bream from one shoal in Hickling Broad.

On the very same day, and on the same broad, four anglers belonging to a London Club, called the Friendly Anglers' Society (probably to distinguish themselves from some other bloodthirsty brotherhood), landed seventy-nine bream weighing 176 lbs.

This would give an average of precisely thirty-six ounces for each fish, making probably an unique record for *average* weight.

It is sad to think these poor fellows would haply have to pay for excess luggage on their return to London.

Wroxham Broad—the deepest of the Norfolk lagoons—yielded fine sport, for on August 10th, Mr. Pitts and his friend, Mr. Steward, took 140 lbs. of bream, and next day with the able assistance of Mrs. Pitts, no less than 157 lbs. in the short space of about six hours.

In August, too, on Hickling, two rods took 155 lbs. in a single day, and so *ad infinitum*.

These records seem to say:

“ Hot weather for bream,
And cold for pike,
But for perch and for roach
Just whenever they like.”

Mr. Beard (of Norwich), fishing with Marcom, landed

just one hundredweight—this was in August, 1897, at Buckenham.

Think of these mighty doings, ye anglers of dykes and canal banks, who weigh in by ounces, and often stiggle about a drachm or dram—spell it either way, and it will hit the case very well.

To go into the records of perch and roach would take too long and require too much space in a book of this kind, where humour rather than solemn fact is aimed at; we will therefore turn from aggregate weight to *size* of individual fish, and see how the addition of a certain European fish would affect the Broad.

CHAPTER V.

THE ADVENT OF SILURUS GLANIS.

IN former times there was a large fish caught in the Shannon and other Irish rivers of the above classical name, but although it is now extinct in Ireland, one was caught in the Essex river Stour only a few years since, and brought to London for examination and authentication.

At the present day these fish are found in considerable numbers in the rivers of Eastern Europe, more especially in the Dneiper, Don, Bugg, and Vistula. They are not small fish by any means, as they run to about six feet in length, and sometimes attain as much as eight feet. They weigh about as much as an ordinary man—that is, anything between nine and twelve stone.

This is the fish Ernest Suffling, in 1897, advocated should be tried in the Broads, as he could not see why the introduction of such a fish should not have a beneficial result in keeping down the price of butchers' meat in the numerous but poor Broadland villages. He surmised that the thing could be easily done. "Catch

the young fry," said he, "pop them in properly aerated tanks, ship them from Constantinople, and on arrival place them in the upper waters of the three rivers (Yare, Bure, and Waveney), and in due time we should have those rivers well-stocked with these fine fish. The muddy rivers would suit them admirably, and they would get as fat as butter, and as lazy as pigs, to the delight of all frequenters of our rivers during the summer."

But the thinking man has his doubts on these matters; granting that these fish might be easily brought over and acclimatized, yet what would follow.

Let us see, let us look forward a little, so as to give the little siluri time to grow big.

We can obtain all the information we require by looking over the truthful columns of the local press. Ah! here is a paragraph in the *Stalham Starcher* of March 9th, 1910.

"That noble fish (the *Silurus Glanis*) appears to be doing well in our rivers. The quietude of the district appears to suit them, and the fat, oozy mud seems to give them an ideal habitat. Many fine fellows have been taken this season, close up to the town staithe, many of them weighing from forty to fifty pounds each, while one, which was killed by being crushed by a wherry, under Wayford Bridge, scaled over five stone.

"We would remind our readers that these are only baby fish to what we may expect in a few years."

Here is another comment, culled from that bright little *brochure*, the *Barton Bungler*, July, 1912.

“ *The Children and the New Fish.*

“The village children appear to have quite taken to the huge fish, of which our Broad appears to have an ample stock, we allude to the Siluri, which they now call the ‘Glenny.’

“Naturally ‘Silurus Glanis’ is a too scientific name for their little tongues to utter, and the name they have hit upon is a happy one, and from its rhyming qualities very helpful to the poet.

“It is a pretty sight to see the chubby children troop down to the Broad as soon as school is over, to watch and feed the beautiful Glennies,” etc., etc.

From the columns of the *Hickling Hooter*, of August 17th, 1913, we obtain another notice of a somewhat similar kind.

“The Glennies in the Broad appear to be wonderfully intelligent, many remarkable incidents having come to our notice, one or two of which we will briefly chronicle.

“It has now become a recognised practice among the school children to stream off straight from the school-house, at four o’clock, when their lessons for the day cease, to the Broad side, where they feed the huge Glennies on whatever remnants they have left from their own dinners, or on scraps of meat, lobworms, or other food acceptable to the Silurus.

"But the curious fact is that the intelligent fish have learned that shortly after the school bell rings (to let the children's parents know that school is over) they will be fed, and accordingly they come as far out of the water upon the sloping staithe as the fleetness of the water will allow, where they lie and wallow while they await the children's arrival.

"Again; they have learned to discriminate between a boat loaded with rushes and one loaded with hay. The latter they will follow quite across the Broad, tugging away at the sweet grass which trails in the water, and of which they are inordinately fond."

The *Catfield Cuckoo*, of the 28th November, 1913, says:

"No more semi-starvation during the winter for the labouring classes! We are glad to say that the catches of Glenny during the week have been good, many fish weighing up to 145 lbs. each having been taken.

"Prime cuts may be had at threepence per pound, to the extent of say twenty pounds, while the remainder of the fish finds ready purchasers at one penny per pound.

"These parts keep well when thoroughly salted and stored in a cool place, or if well dried and kept packed in sawdust.

"We may note that Mr. Lowblow, of Yarmouth, has started a Glenny kippery, and finds a very ready sale for the fish, when kippered a lovely glossy mahogany colour, at the uniform price of twopence per pound."

Now comes a note of warning—not the first, by-the-bye—but the first on which we can place the editorial digits.

It is from the *Wroxham Wobbler*, January, 1914, anent the curious hybrid lucius-silurus, or as it is popularly called, pike-glenny. It says:

“A Warning to Anglers.

“We would caution any readers who may angle on the Broads, that many cases of the ferocity of the pike-glenny have been brought to our notice.

“During December no less than four cases were treated in our Cottage Hospital, all of them being from bites of the pike-glenny.

“One gentleman was so severely bitten about the hand and wrist that amputation of the limb at the elbow was resorted to. He was a stranger from London, and had never seen a seventy-pound pike-glenny before, and was foolish enough to attempt to drag the fish ashore with his naked hands, not apparently ever having heard of the necessary steel-plated gauntlets used by our local anglers when angling for this ferocious fish.

“Another hospital case was that of a well-known resident, whose proud boast it is that for twenty-five years he has not missed having his dip in the Broad, winter or summer, except when covered with ice.

“The unfortunate gentleman was seized by a big pike-glenny and dragged completely under water.

"It is surmised that the fish mistook the gentleman's leg for a frost-bitten carrot, of which the former are very fond, and upon which they have been recently fed. Mr. — is recovering rapidly, the mouthful of calf of which he was robbed having been, thanks to surgical science, replaced from a prime cut of rump steak from the Norfolk beast which gained the award in the recent Cattle Show in London.

"In face of these accidents it behoves visitors angling on the Broad to be careful. We may add that the pike-glenny may be known from the common pike by the fact that although very young, it is three times the size of the latter. It is also a much more powerful fish, and when drawn from the water barks in a manner suggestive of that of the mastiff. Its teeth are in three rows, very long and massive."

Among the advertisements is one we here copy.

"To Pike-Glenny Fishermen. Why imperil your limbs when you can buy a pair of Snorter's celebrated glenny gauntlets for half a sovereign? Warranted good English leather and finest stamped steel."

The *Stokesby Siffleur* for May 30th, 1917, edited by a French gentleman, speaks highly of the *Silurus Glanis* and its powers of receiving what he terms an education of 'tractability, and refers to its suitability for draught or traction.

He speaks in eulogistic terms of Mr. F——, of Runham, who has tamed a pair of huge glennies (each about seven feet in length), in such a manner that with

high leather traces, bridles (of the muzzle pattern) and reins, he can attach them to his little boat and be drawn at a very fair rate to whatsoever place he may wish to go.

The editor adds that Mr. F——, having a long white beard, makes an ideal Neptune, and suggests that he shall build another boat in the form of an aquatic car.

Here is another cutting which clearly proves that the glenny is capable of becoming a keen rival to the turf.

Horning Howler, September 2nd, 1917.

"The race between Mr. F—— of Runham's glenny 'Torpedo,' and Sir E. L——'s glenny 'Incompushable,' took place on Thursday last before a large concourse of people.

"The course was from the Ferry Inn to Hoveton Broad Current Carr and back.

"George Sloan, son of the veteran Tod Sloan, rode 'Incompushable,' while young Grimshaw held the reins and trident (whips being unusable) on 'Torpedo.'

"The former glenny started favourite at six to four. Such an immense crowd has never thronged the river banks as on this occasion.

"Sloan appeared to sit very low in the water, and but very little of his well-oiled body could be seen, indeed at times only his neck and head were visible.

"Grimshaw, who had trained himself to a perfect skeleton for the race, only scaled five stone six pounds. His idea was evidently to minimize the water

resistance as much as possible. He sat well out of the water, his slender, even effeminate waist being plainly visible.

"The race was grand. First one and then the other showing ahead, indeed at the Current Carr, where the turn was made, only a length separated the two racers. 'Incompushable' here showed splendid tail work, and Sloan was taken round in about four flaps of the glenny's huge caudal fin.

" 'Torpedo,' when half-way along the home course, appeared to tire, and despite Grimshaw's splendid riding, gradually fell in the rear, so much so, that, when half a mile from the winning post the race looked like a dead certainty for 'Incompushable,' who swam with great speed and strength, and was quite six lengths ahead.

"But the battle is not always to the strong.

"At this point (the Elder Carr) a happy idea occurred to Grimshaw. He suddenly released his feet from the stirrups and rode side-saddle.

"This proved the turning point in the race, for his spare ribs and thin flank offered such little resistance to the water that 'Torpedo' at once accelerated his speed, and so much did the change benefit him, that despite his opponent's gamest efforts to retain the lead, he ('Torpedo') won by his gills, or as we should say on the turf—a short head.

"A great deal of money changed hands on the race."

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Between the date of this race and the year 1924, a period of seven years, a great change appears to have taken place, a change deeply to be deplored.

A curious war, a racial war appears to have broken out between the fierce and terrible pike-glenny and the harmless, gentle glenny (the true *Silurus Glanis*). Every week the water bailiffs of the various broads and rivers reported finding the huge carcasses of the glennies floating upon the surface of the water, mutilated and dead, and now and again the body of a pike-glenny which had been killed.

From some unknown cause the former appeared to be waging a war of extermination among the latter, and it was computed that during the years 1922-3, upwards of seven thousand glennies were picked up dead, many of them being enormous fish, so heavy that horses had to be requisitioned to draw them from the water.

The pike-glenny, although small in comparison to the true-bred fish, was nevertheless a formidable fellow, and frequently attained a length of seven feet and a weight of from 200 to 250 pounds.

It may be stated that the head was exactly one quarter of the total length, and its mouth enormous. Its teeth ranged from an inch to two inches in length, and were in several rows.

By 1924, the true Glenny was no more. It had become extinct—annihilated by the ferocious hybrid, which had become so fierce and so enormously

increased in numbers that the broads were deserted by the usual throngs of anglers and summer visitors.

True, the electric steamers still plied, and the wherries (now sailless and driven by electric motors) also used the rivers, but rowing-boats were seldom seen on the shallower waters, for it was known that by using their tails on the mud the awful pike-glennies could leap into a rowing-boat and maim the occupants, unless the latter were provided with strong gauntlets and firearms.

From the *Acle Ranter*, of March, 1924, we obtain the following :

“ The Pike-Glenny Doomed at Last.

“ In consequence of the great loss of limb and even life that has recently taken place among those who use our rivers as a means of securing a livelihood, the various parishes contiguous to the broads have decided to raise a fund, by the imposition of a small rate, by which the pike-glenny may be entirely extirpated from our waterways.

“ The central committee authorise us to convey to our readers the fact that two shillings will be paid for every head of a pike-glenny brought to the chief exterminator, at the Pound, Ludham Bridge, that being the centre chosen for the whole district.”

Thousands, we read, were brought in, but alas! the big ones proved much too wily and strong to be caught by ordinary means.

Four men lost their lives in one month by being attacked by the old bulls, who fight like demons, and human arms and legs were so frequently mangled that a surgeon was located at the Pound House.

Quite a pile of wooden legs and arms were stacked in the lobby of the worthy gentleman's surgery ready for fitting to victims after amputations.

Strong nets failed to hold the older and heavier fish, who used their huge teeth to cut the meshes, and even wire nets were pierced by the powerful creatures.

Gradually, however, by the use of iron ring netting, lent by the Admiralty, the remnants of the pike-glennies, to the number of from 2,000 to 3,000, were gradually rounded up by the aid of scores of torpedo nets and iron-sheathed boats, and driven into Ranworth Broad, which, having but one entrance, forms a cul-de-sac.

Now came the time for slaughtering the captives, and this was planned to be carried out by boatloads of men armed with lances, swords, and axes, ordinary rifle-bullets having failed to pierce the armour-like scales of the monsters, except perhaps occasionally, when they came very near the surface.

From the *Ranworth Rattler*, of October, 1925, we find that the attack in a great measure failed.

"Thursday was a sad day for Ranworth, as during the extermination of the empounded pike-glennies two boats, each containing five men, were overturned, and their crews thrown among the enraged fish.

“Other boats closed round and did what they could to assist the poor fellows, but although two of them were dragged into boats comparatively unhurt, yet three lost their legs (they were mangled and afterwards amputated), and four lost their lives, being dragged down into the mud and literally torn to shreds.

“The authorities at Yarmouth have been asked to take the matter in hand, and a subscription is on foot for the wives and families of those lost and maimed in Thursday’s battle.”

At length the end was reached, as we learn from the able pen of the editor of the *Martham Mardler*, of April 28th, 1926.

“Victory at Last.”

“It is with feelings of great pleasure that we are enabled to chronicle the entire extirpation of that dreaded scourge of our beautiful inland waters—the pike-glenny. We trust the announcement may be the means of bringing back the great numbers of pleasure-seekers, who, during the closing years of last century, and in fact until recently, used annually to make the broads their playground.

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“On Wednesday last a contingent of sailors and marines were sent from Yarmouth to Ranworth, being conveyed in two large electric wagons; a company of

the Royal Engineers also landed per electric æroplane from Norwich.

"Being first on the field the naval men, aided by their good friends the 'jollies,' took the onerous task in hand.

"The marines, placed by fours in iron protected boats, commenced by firing steel-pointed and explosive bullets, and with some mead of success, as in less than an hour they killed about fifty of the monsters, and succeeded in driving the greater number of the vast shoal to one end of the broad, where the tars had laid several small mines and many single charges of dynamite in mining cartridges.

"At a given signal the marines retired in their boats, whereupon the mines and dynamite cartridges were exploded by electricity.

"A tremendous upheaval of mud and water took place, the stench of the released gases nearly overcoming those of the gallant fellows who happened to be nearest, in fact, brandy had to be administered to several of the more severe cases.

"Strange to say, however, the mighty explosion did very little damage to the pike-glennies, not more than from eighty to one hundred being killed and stunned.

"Probably the immense body of mud at the bottom of the broad nullified the force of the concussion, and acted as a soft pad between the explosives and the fish.

"Could the mighty fish have been prevailed upon to

put their heads out of the water they would have been asphyxiated—one whiff would have settled the strongest—but knowing something diabolical was in hand, the wily denizens of the lagoons buried themselves deeply in the mud, where they were comparatively safe.

“The Engineers, who had by this time arrived, stood looking on, and were equally surprised at the result with their comrades, expecting to see hundreds of the pike-glennies blown up by the large charges used.

“They soon formulated a plan of their own, and with the aid of the tars and marines proceeded to place their theory into practise.

“Sergeant-Major Squish, who was in charge, had all the torpedo nets lashed together with copper wire. This gave him a total length of nearly a quarter of a mile of impregnable netting.

“This huge iron-ringed net was then fastened to the bows of a score of large boats filled with marines and sailors, who, starting from one end of the broad, used their novel net as a wall to drive the pike-glenny to the smaller end of the broad.

“This movement was successfully accomplished, when the two ends were quietly brought round, in what the gallant Sergeant-Major termed a flanking operation being gradually brought nearer and nearer until the great fish were completely circled in.

“Still the movement was continued—the two ends being taken in opposite directions, and circularly, until a double cordon or wall of iron rings was drawn com-

pletely round the struggling mass of fish, who fought desperately with each other when they found themselves entrapped without any means of escape.

"Now came the clever part of the Sergeant-Major's device. He ordered the electric wagons with their powerful batteries to be drawn close down to the margin of the water, the aerostat battery being also called into requisition and placed beside the wagons.

"Wires were now connected to the three powerful batteries, and their united power presently brought into action upon the ringed netting, which formed a splendid conductor and completed the circuit.

"All this was carried out under the instructions of Sergeant-Major Squish in less than two hours—a very smart performance.

"The circuit being complete, the little knob was pressed, and such a powerful electric current passed through the net that many of the dreadful monsters were killed immediately. Soon scores and even hundreds of the great fish lay motionless and dead on the surface of the water they had so long infested.

"Dynamite cartridges were then exploded in various parts of the circle (which it must be remembered was only about seventy yards in diameter), with a view of frightening the fish and making them rush about to escape, and so causing them to come into contact with the highly electrically-charged nets.

"This plan was entirely successful, and in less than three hours the entire shoal were floating in piles upon

the surface, where they looked like a pond filled with floating logs: electrocution had been entirely successful.

"The soldiers and sailors deserve the utmost praise for the way in which they did their work; they worked together like one man and with one accord.

"A fund is being raised to purchase the discharge of Sergeant-Major Squish, who will be in due course installed as mine host in a Norwich inn. This reward the fine fellow has nobly merited, and we hope that having been successful in the army he may make a successful Bung in our cathedral city.

"By the way, some of the pike-glennies were of tremendous size and weight, several being upwards of eight feet in length, four feet in girth, and drawing the beam at more than four hundredweight.

"The two finest, when stuffed, will be presented to the Sergeant-Major to hang in his bar.

* * * *

"Now, once more the little children may enjoy their water frolics, and young men and maidens in their boats on a Sunday afternoon be wafted by gentle zephyrs whithersoever their fancy leads them without fear. May love be at the prow and pleasure at the helm."

CHAPTER VI.

TALES OF A GRANDMOTHER.

NO apology is needed to Sir Walter Scott for the above heading, as it is not intended as a companion to his "Tales of a Grandfather," neither has it any connection with Darwin's "Tails of our Forefathers," and less with Prodson's "Tael's of the Mandarins." They are merely true tales of a grandmother who was born towards the end of the eighteenth century, and who had a very vivid remembrance of her childhood at the beginning of the nineteenth.

The writer's grandmother, who was born in 1796, lived till 1892, retaining all her faculties till the last, her "untimely" death being the result of a broken leg, and melancholia produced by the thoughts of her helplessness and the trouble she might give to others.

"Fancy me living all these years and then having to be waited upon like a little child." And the thought (and constant confinement) hastened her end.

Her childhood and girlhood were spent in the little coast village of Palling, of which parish her father was lord of the manor and chief landowner.

To lovers of East Norfolk her reminiscences may prove acceptable.

When she was a girl the system of drainage, when not totally absent, was very inefficient, so much so, that the country around Palling was little more than a swamp or fen. What is now the Commissioners' Drain was then a meandering river in summer, and a very respectable broad in winter, so that navigation was possible from Lessingham to Palling (through Ingham), but now corn and mangold, barley and beet, take the place of the rank tussocky marsh grass which was formerly the only crop—in other words, beef-land is turned into bread-land; corn takes the place of cows.

Calthorpe Broad, now a private pond or lake of eight or ten acres, was then a goodly pool varying from twenty to thirty acres, according to the time of year, but drainage and filling in has so brought the water within bounds, that it is now a pretty little pool for the preservation of pike and rudd, together with a few perch and roach.

Several broads which were in existence in grandam's young days, are now solid agricultural land, producing fine crops.

Of these, Smallburgh Broad was one. The old lady remembers frequent excursions upon it, but nothing of it remains at the present day except two broad dykes, each about a mile in length. Probably the reclaimed land in the parish cannot be less than a hundred acres.

In the adjoining parish was, and is, Dilham Broad. It *was*, years ago, a fine sheet of water, spreading and extending in all directions according to the amount of rain which fell from October till March, but the cutting of the North Walsham Canal through one part of it, the raising of a canal bank and lock, and the subsequent dam thrown across another part, have so diminished its area that what *now* remains is merely a huge, picturesque mill-dam. Without a doubt the nineteenth century wrought a great change in the aspect and area of *all* the broads, with perhaps one or two minor exceptions; indeed from a study of old maps and the inspection of the surroundings of the broads themselves, the writer assumes that there has been a shrinkage of something like thirty per cent in the water area of the broads during the century.

Not only has the area diminished, but in several instances broads have *entirely* disappeared. In 1810, towards Yarmouth, between Waxham and Winterton, was a large fen, in the midst of which stood Horsey, a mere hamlet with an ancient church, and but a handful of inhabitants; while through the village was a single cart track, called by a courteous stretch of imagination a road. It was so soft and boggy, and bad for vehicles, that during the winter and wet seasons people using it used to carry faggots or sheaves of reed on their carts to throw down in bad places, to prevent the vehicles sticking fast, and to bridge over otherwise impassable gaps caused by running water.

It was not till grandmother was a woman grown, that is about 1820, that Mr. Robert Rising, of Horsey Hall, undertook the practical drainage of the parish, by which means he recovered several hundred acres of fen and turned it into meadow and arable land.

He made roads through the parish from place to place, and, in short, turned an isolated dismal swamp into a valuable estate. He also shot and preserved one of the finest collection of wild-fowl ever brought together by a private person. Rising did for Horsey what Coke did for Holkham, made an estate out of a howling wilderness.

Horsey Mere, which now covers about 120 acres, was in the early years of the century of vastly greater dimensions, ranging from 200 to 250 acres.

Horsey pike have ever been famous, even in Broadland, both for size and toothsome-ness.

At Somerton, in the old lady's time, there were two broads, one of about thirty acres, and the other about three times that acreage, but by careful drainage they both disappeared many years ago, and where fish once swam corn now waves; so that the inhabitants reap a cereal instead of a piscine harvest. So soon is geographical history blotted out that probably very few of the present inhabitants of the parish know of the former existence of broads in their midst.

But now, after these dry details, for drainage and reclaiming is drying work, we will allow the old lady to use her own tongue and words, and relate a little

story. Whether it is a lively or a deadly tale the reader must judge for himself. We will call it

THE BOLD MAIDENS.

I remember that during one winter, about 1812, when I was a girl of sixteen, the coast was visited by a terrible storm, and the sea rolled in in such massive breakers that it was impossible for any boat to be launched, because in those days it must be remembered lifeboats were unknown.

News came to the Manor House that a vessel had struck the sands but a short distance from the shore ; this was just as we had finished dinner, and in those days we dined at noon, because we rose very early.

There was no turning day into night, or night into day in my young times ; folks rose early, had their meals at proper times, and went to bed as they ought to—early. God made the day for man and his work, and night for his repose, or had He intended us to use the night He would probably have given us eyes like the cat, the owl, the bat, and other night creatures.

I remember, at the news, my father jumped up from the arm-chair in which he always sat at the head of the table, and shouted loudly for his horse, “Beauty,” to be saddled. She *was* a beauty too ; tall and black and glossy as satin, while right in the centre of her forehead was a white blaze, which I used fancifully to call “The Star of Beauty.”

The wind was howling around the tall gables of the old house, and bellowing down the chimneys, while the rain lashed the windows in sudden squalls that threatened to break the little diamond panes. It came down in such torrents that the sky was quite overcast, and it appeared like evening more than a little past noon.

When father put on his leather leggings and his big overcoat, I commenced to don my foul weather garments, but he quickly stopped me with:

"Why, my child, are you mad? Take off those things immediately, and mind, I forbid your going on the beach. Keep indoors and entertain your friend, and on my return you shall have a full account of what transpires. Good-bye, my darling!"

Then springing upon Beauty's back he rode away through the storm in the direction of the beach.

But as soon as he departed we felt so lonely, my friend, Annie Page, and I, that we disobediently resolved to bundle up in thick wraps and go down to the beach to see what was taking place for ourselves.

So disregarding my dad's emphatic command, like wayward girls, we went.

Oh! it was a dreadful day, and the half-frozen rain lashed into our faces till they tingled again, and soon saturated and spoiled our little "kiss curls," which were so much in fashion just before Waterloo.

Away we trotted through the deep mud, and soon reached the beach, where the wind seemed to sting and

bite more than ever; for it was from the sea, nearly due east, and laden with frigid spray, which hurtled through the keen air and pricked our faces like thorns.

We could see nothing of the doomed ship; but there were the black billows, leaping and exploding into white cascades, sending the frothy foam flying far inland. Groups of men and women were standing on the wind-swept shore, bending and shouting to each other, and pointing excitedly towards the sea. I remember they looked like little black marionettes standing out from the white background of crashing breakers.

We joined one of the groups, and ascertained that the ship was rapidly breaking up.

Father had ridden along the beach to ascertain if anyone had been washed ashore, and we presently saw him trotting slowly back, his horse being quite close to the sea, with the water sometimes up to its knees.

He was so intent in scanning the waves that we felt quite safe from his searching eyes, muffled up as we were, and mingling with the little groups of men and women who shivered or "duddled" in their saturated clothes.

Suddenly I saw father pull up his horse and point out to sea, and wave his arms, and shout to a group of men near him; then came a great confusion and bustle, as excited men in oily frocks seized the yawl and began to push her towards the sea.

I too would have helped as the other women did, but I was afraid father would discover me and send

me home, for the open beach in such a storm was no place for a young girl of sixteen. So Annie and I stood and clung to each other and watched, trembling with cold and excitement.

I remember the men scrambling into the boat, others pushing off with oars and long poles, while shouts went up that sailors could be seen floating in the breakers, buoyed up by pieces of wreck.

Then as we forced our way to the shore, for the wind was so great that it nearly threw us off our feet, we saw the great white yawl capsize, and throw its crew of more than a dozen men into the angry sea. It was indeed a terrible sight, and Annie and I forgetting ourselves screamed aloud.

Other men threw themselves into the "send" of the great breakers, to the rescue of their comrades, and soon, with the aid of long ropes and also by human ropes made by men linking their hands together, all were saved, though one poor fellow had his thigh-bone broken, and another was struck by floating wreckage and seriously injured about the head and shoulders.

Dear me, how the wind *did* blow to be sure; it cut off the tops of the billows and whirled them in great yeasty puffs far up the beach, right to the marram banks, covering everything and everybody as it flew landward; that biting east wind pierced one to the very marrow.

Again came the cry that sailors could be seen tossing about on the wild black water, just behind the breakers, and as they neared the shore, Annie and I

could discern certain shapeless black objects heaving about helplessly and erratically in the cruel sea, and which we were told were really human beings struggling for dear life. Gazing at those indistinct and frequently invisible "spots," sometimes above and sometimes beneath the surface, I remember thinking to myself:

"Can those tiny helpless little things be men? What specks of humanity they appear! Too insignificant to have feeling, and hope, and sorrow, and the many other attributes of men; too small to bear the great brave hearts of British mariners!"

Suddenly, while these strange thoughts of man's insignificance were occupying my brains, I saw my father suddenly drive his spurs into poor Beauty's flanks and turn her head straight for the sea.

A crowd at once rushed to the spot, and we with the rest.

Beauty rose on her hind legs and dashed through a great billow, and to my horror disappeared.

I clung to Annie, fancying I had seen the last of my dear father, and bitterly regretted having left the Manor House. Another glimpse seaward through my dimmed eyelids, for the salt tears and salter spray made my vision obscure, and I saw Beauty's black form again rise to view, but—*the saddle was empty!*

I screamed loudly, and clutched Annie hysterically, wailing, "He's lost! He's lost!"

Beauty's head was turned shoreward, but where was my poor father?

I ran to the very edge of the water, and then to my

joy saw a figure clutching the saddle, or to my distraught vision and senses there appeared to be two figures.

My whole body shook with excitement, I was totally oblivious that I stood surrounded by water, which surged round my ankles.

"Is my father then alive after all?" I thought. Alas! I screamed in terror, for at that instant a huge billow covered everything in a perfect avalanche of destruction. I felt that I should faint from very horror, for I imagined all was over; but suddenly Beauty and those clinging to her—for there were two men—were sent flying high up the beach, and before the retiring wash of the wave could draw them back and once more engulf them, a score of willing hands seized them, horse and men, and dragged them beyond the power of the sea.

Beauty, father, and a stranger were safe.

I did not faint.

Brave father sat down on a piece of timber, quite exhausted and panting for breath. I could stand the strain no longer, but ran to him, and flung my arms fondly around his neck.

But instead of being pleased to have me comfort him, he thrust me off, being very angry, and ordered me home at once.

"Shall I obey, or cling to him?" I asked myself, but knowing my father's will and temperament, I went home with Annie, leaving my heart behind me. On arriving at the Manor House, Annie and I took off our dripping clothes and awaited father's return.

Oh, the anxiety of that hour during which we listened for the sound of Beauty's footfall and my dear father's voice.

It was terrible!

Should we ever hear either again?

Yes, my father arrived at last, and kissing me, disrobed and went straight to bed, whither I took him some hot refreshments and sat at his bedside, while with glistening eyes he told me of what had happened on the shore.

Annie was also allowed to come into the room, and we had the whole story of my father's noble deeds from his own lips.

He told us he had ridden into the sea three times, once, as we had seen with our own eyes, bringing out a live man, and twice returning with what afterwards proved to be the corpses of two poor fellows.

* * * * *

Our groom afterwards told us that the two poor fellows my father had recovered from the sea were now lying on the threshing floor in the barn, covered with a stack cloth, while the live man, the survivor of a crew of nine, had been taken to the village inn and placed in bed. He had recovered so far that he had regained consciousness, and was able to talk, but being a Frenchman, no one in the village, not even the parson, could understand him.

Father did not get up again that evening, but took a well-earned sleep, the whole clock round, and well he deserved it.

Annie and I sat talking for an hour or two over the comfortable fire, my mother being absent on a visit to Dilham, when somehow our conversation turned to the dead men in the barn.

Annie said she would like to see them, and asked me if I had the courage to go and look at them. Wishing to prove that I was the daughter of a brave man I assumed an air of nonchalance and courage, which was really foreign to my nature, but to prove my friend's courage and sustain the reputation of my own, I challenged her to accompany me to the barn and have a peep at the poor drowned mariners.

She consented, if I would go first and carry the lantern, to which I agreed.

Muffling ourselves up, for it was very cold, we lighted the horn lantern, and with uncertain steps walked hand in hand across the par-yard and into the little side door of the immense barn.*

Our hearts beat almost audibly, but neither would show the white feather, as we crept forward, in awe, upon tip-toe towards the threshing floor, which was near the other end of the barn, alongside of which ran the public highway.

When we reached the threshing floor, or as the men then called it, the "throishing plancher," we paused

* It is still standing, as is also the Manor House.

and held the lantern aloft. It was one of those old-fashioned horn affairs which did little more than render darkness visible, but still we managed to discover a bed of straw covered with tarpaulin, or as we then called it, a "tar-sheet."

We stood irresolute.

I know that the advent of a mouse would have caused me to scream for very fear, but pride of my character forbade me outwardly showing the horror I inwardly felt.

"Annie," I whispered in a shaky, husky voice, "dare you draw the covering aside?"

"I will help *you* to," she replied.

Then after some hesitation we agreed each to take a corner and so pull the tar-sheet off together. To show our pluck we gave a vigorous tug, and suddenly exposed the lifeless forms to view.

The terrible sight proved too much for me. The head of one man had been torn from his body, and was placed at his side.

Annie, who had carried the lantern from the barn door, gave a piercing shriek and dropped it with a rattle upon the hard, clay floor, and immediately followed it by falling with a heavy thud beside it, in a deep faint.

I stood for a moment like one distraught, and then in the pitchy darkness, standing as I did between the dead men and my inanimate friend, I rent the night with scream after scream for help, my eyes feeling

as if they were bulging from their sockets with horror.

Suddenly a violent banging on one of the great barn doors appeared to freeze the very blood in my heart, and giving one more yell of terror all became blank.

Some of our own farm hands happened to be passing the barn at the very moment, and hearing the screams, entered the barn by the door we had left open and found us lying insensible by the bodies of the defunct mariners.

A doctor—the nearest lived at Stalham, four miles away—was summoned by my father's orders, and we were put to bed and kept there all next day, the shock to our nervous system having thoroughly unstrung our nerves.

The doctor informed my father that it would not have greatly surprised him had such a sudden shock bereft us of our reason.

We quite recovered from our fright, however, but we never afterwards boasted to each other of our courage, nor visited dead sailors in the dark.

COULEUR DE ROSE.

When a girl the old lady had a bonny pair of rosy cheeks, more rosy than bonny *she* thought them; in fact, their peony-like tint gave her the idea that the blooming cheeks possessed a "horrid redundancy of colour."

In those days blood letting, or as it was called by the doctors "phlebotomy," was in vogue, and persons were bled or cupped for almost every affliction that man is heir to. Did a man have a fit? bleed him. Had he fallen off a house? bleed him. Had he been drunk over night? bleed him. Was he too fat? bleed him. Was he at death's door? then bleed him. The doctors of those days probably drew more blood than was shed in any modern battle, or drunk by the insatiable lunette of the guillotine.

Granny thought the matter over and naturally, in ignorance, came to the conclusion that she possessed too much blood; a glance in the mirror quite confirmed her diagnosis. There were her ruddy cheeks, and there sure enough was the red blood under the transparent skin; now the thing would be to remove some of that blood, and so remove some of the colour.

But how?

She had heard much talk of blood letting, but she could not bleed herself, for she did not know how.

She carefully thought the matter over as to whom she could get to bleed her strictly under the rose!

She knew of nobody in the neighbourhood, except old Mrs. Mardle, but she had such a wagging tongue it would never do to trust her with such an important secret, everyone in the village would know it in less than a week.

There was Dr. F——w, of North Walsham. But alas! that town was nearly ten miles away.

Still, it was the only way, so she patiently watched for an opportunity of stealing off unperceived by her parents.

Several weeks elapsed before an opportunity occurred, but all comes to those who wait, and the absence of good little Mary's parents on a two days' visit to friends at Yarmouth gave her the desired leisure.

Mary tramped the ten miles, and footsore and weary entered the portals of kind old Dr F——w.

Good mornings exchanged, the question was asked: "And now what can I do for you, miss?"

Then came trembling words, almost inaudible, from the faltering little miss, as she requested to be bled.

"Oh, certainly," said the worthy doctor; "but let me first clearly understand what is the nature of your ailment."

Oh, those peony cheeks, how they glowed, and how the little tongue stammered as it replied:

"Well, doctor, I've eh—I've got too much colour, in fact, I think my cheeks look horribly vulgar, and eh—therefore I've come to the conclusion that I ought to be bled to relieve my cheeks of their vulgarity."

The doctor lay back in his chair and roared, much to the chagrin of his patient.

"Why, my good child, whatever are you thinking about? those cheeks of yours would be the envy of many a Court lady, health and vigour are stamped on them; and what you deem 'horribly vulgar redness,' I call a healthy pink—the pink of perfection!

“No! no, my good girl, leave well alone, and do not imagine bleeding will add anything in the way of charm to what, as I say, is already perfection. Now my man is going to Stalham in an hour’s time, and he shall then drive you home, for you must be very tired—ten miles on heavy roads is a long march for sweet seventeen.”

Then came tears and entreaty from Mary. She had walked ten miles to be bled, and could not go home without the object of her visit being accomplished. If Dr. F——w would not oblige her, another must.

Seeing at last that expostulation was vain, the good old doctor consented, and with much show and flourish, and ensanguinement of water and bandage, the deed was done, and Mary returned happy to Palling, with her plump little arm bandaged.

Next day Mary was awake before daylight, and thinking of her journey of the previous day, wondering what effect it would have on her appearance, and then she slumbered again, awaking only when the sun was high in the sky.

She leapt out of bed and rushed to the dressing-table, but only to recoil with something like dismay. The long walk and drive of the previous day had left her cheeks—*redder than ever!*

* * * * *

And what was more, the ruddy complexion kept with her through life; and even after death the rosy hue

was plainly visible in the dear old withered cheeks of the almost centenarian.

Strangely enough, the Manor House is now occupied by an old lady whose years are more than five score, and who yet seems full of life and vigour. Although our East Coast has been accused of terrible bleakness, yet it would appear that there is a vigour or bracing property in it that has a knack of producing not pneumonia, but quite a number of centenarians. A glance at the church registers or tombstones will give many instances.

CHAPTER VII.

BROADLAND SUPERSTITIONS.

PROBABLY every county has its superstitions and beliefs, some local, and some spread like "spring sulphur" under a transparent veneer of treacle over the whole slice. Norfolk and Cornwall, lying as they do in extremes of the country, are no exception to other counties in folk-lore and superstition, indeed one cannot imagine any other counties having more rooted aversion to the slaying of their pet bogeys than these two.

Which of the twain stands pre-eminent as champion in superstition would be hard to say—perhaps the safest plan would be to say six of one and half a dozen of the other.

Cornwall has its great downs, hills, and mines, and its quaint Cymric people to conjure up and maintain elves and fairies, bogeys and supernatural beings, and to perpetuate strange beliefs and sayings; while Norfolk has its commons, broads, and heaths, its long coast line and its Scandinavian folk to bring together superstitions of all kinds.

Now it happened that the writer recently had an opportunity to compare some of the superstitions of the two counties in question, and putting on his dress of invisibility he will appear as Viator, and question and chat with an aged Norfolk labourer called "Iceni."

Viator has just returned from a second lengthy trip to England's toe—Cornwall—and meets Iceni in the house of a mutual friend. Viator after a while leads the topic of conversation towards superstition with a somewhat interesting result.

Viator. "Why, my good Iceni, since I saw you last I have travelled right round and zig-zagged all about the county of Cornwall, and a very nice place I found it. The people were very kind to me certainly, but do you know I found the people there terribly superstitious, aye, even more so than in your own beloved county of Norfolk."

Iceni. "Well, but maaster, I don't 'low as we are superstitious. Sartinly we may fancy a few strange things, but then yew must allow that many o' these here old woman's stories, as yow call 'em, du come true a' times, now doan't they?"

Viator in reply acknowledged that many of the quaint beliefs might be founded upon some ancient truth, but that nowadays common-sense had nearly knocked the bottom out of the whole saucepan of superstition.

Iceni. "Thet's all very well, maaster, but common-since can't stop the working of a charm nohow. Mebbe yow doan't believe in charms, some folks don't, and 'ont, but I du."

Viator. "What are the charms you allude to?"

Iceni. "Well, take the rits (warts) and corns for instance, I ken cure 'm right easy by a charmin' on 'em away. How? Why simple enow. Take rits for 'sample. Steal a bit o' raw meat and rub on 'em, then hull the meat away, and in tu or tree weeks them there rits 'll all be clean gone—

" 'As the meat decay,
So the rits fly away.'

"Now if I tell yew another simple way to get rid o' rits yow'll think me superstitious, but I don't mind the valler o' a clung tunnup, for them as ha' tried it know 'twill du 'em good. Now see how simple 'tis.

"Ax a man if yew be a woman, or a woman if yew be a man, to buy yar rits for a ha'penny. Well, they gan yew the money for 'em, and it 'ont du 'em no harm. You jest rub the copper on every rit and saay, 'Depart!' Then hull the money away, and in less than a month iviry rit 'll be gone. There, bor! there ain't no superstition about that, 'cause it's truth."

Viator. "Keep to your belief, my friend, if it rids you of your warts. You do not stand alone in strange charms for warts, as the Cornish folks have equally simple methods of ridding their hands of the unsightly parasitical growths.

"They tie as many knots in a piece of twine as there are warts to be removed, then each wart is rubbed with a knot and the string buried. In due course the warts

are said to disappear. Another way is to rub each wart with a small pebble, sew the pebbles in a piece of rag, and throw it away.

"Hey presto! the warts leave your hand and grow on the hand of the person finding and opening the bag of pebbles. Peter is robbed and Paul is enriched."

Iceni. "Ah, yar! I don't hold wi' them sorter charms; get rid on 'em right away I say, not gan 'em to other folks."

Viator. "Do you think it possible to charm a snake?"

Iceni. "I never heerd anyone talk'er charmin' a sneak, but if yew live near a wood no adder will come inter yer house-door if yew make the sign of the cross in front of it with the p'int of a brotch or any mander of stick.

"But I'll tell yer what'll cure a adder's bite. Arter he's bit yer, ketch him wi' a forked stick, or any bit o' wood with a snotch cut in it, kill the darvel, and bile him down.

"As yew bile him skim the risin' fat off the broth, and rub it right well inter the wound, and yew'll be well in a werry short time."

Viator. "The Cornwall people say that if you draw a large circle round the reptile, and place a cross inside the circle, the snake cannot harm you; while if you wish for a further precaution, or having been bitten require an antidote, you must three times repeat these sentences from the Bible.

“‘Let God arise, let His enemies be scattered: let them also that hate Him flee before Him.’

“‘As smoke is driven away, so drive them away; as wax melteth before the fire, so let the wicked perish at the presence of God.’

(These sentences, by the way, were the identical verses used in ancient times by persons when they had made a waxen image of anyone they wished to die. The image of the person was held before a fire and melted while the words were being recited.)

“The Cornish folk believe in many charms for ordinary ailments, and before I ask your opinion on their efficacy, I will mention a few as they occur to me.

“For whooping-cough they cut a little hair from the withers of a donkey, just where the dark hair of the shoulders and back join, forming a cross. This is put in a bag and hung round the child’s neck, when the charm will work a cure—at least so they say.

“Another cure for the same complaint is to catch a mouse, kill it, and bake it to a cinder; take the cinder and pound it in a mortar, or its substitute, until it is in a fine powder. Mix the powder with milk and give it to the patient to drink. It is a veritable ‘black-draught.’

“It is said that a Good-Friday-Hot-Cross-Bun saved throughout the year is very efficacious if grated and given to a patient suffering from any ordinary complaint. It is the cross that works the charm.

“A knuckle bone carried in the pocket is a protection

against cramp, and some forms of gout; while a small potato so carried will charm away rheumatism. Do you believe these things, my friend, or do you know of any similar ones in your own county?"

Iceni. "Lor, maaster, I know lots of them there sorter ramadies. We hev our way o' dealin' wi' rheumatiz, and it's simple enow, as yew shall larn. Take a fairish-sized warm (an earthworm) and put it inter a bottle, then cover up the bottle in a muck-heap—a good hot one—and by-and-by the warm 'll melt up. Then yew take sum o' the likker, and anoint the jints affected and it'll du 'em a power o' good.

"This yer same stuff's a rare fine ramady for earache, on'y yew must pour it in right hot.

"Then there's chilblains; yew kin cure them with a sprig o' hulver (holly). Jest beat the blains w' it till the blood come freeler, and thin woish 'em in salt and water, and there y' are."

Viator. "Are you aware that in Italy the people believe in the power of the 'evil eye'—*mal occhio* they call it—and that the Egyptian agriculturists and the Hindoos also have the same belief?"

"Well," said *Iceni* warily, "what do the Cornish folks fare to think about this here 'evil eye?'"

Viator. "I think it very probable that half the people west of the Tamar are covert believers in it, although only the few will speak of it in an overt manner.

"Many a Cornish man and woman, when they re-

ceive the Sacrament, will break off and hide a mite of the sacred bread, and carry it about with them as a charm against the 'evil eye.'"

Iceni. "Now, maaster, yew'll think I'm a bit dizzy if I saay, I *du* believe in both 'wise' people and the 'evil eye,' an' I'll tell yew w'y, and mind it ain't no idle golder, because it happened to me.

"Last June I wuz in Walsham on Market-day, and hevin' a look round, hu should I meet but old X——, the 'wise' man, as we call him, 'cause he can cure all mander o' things and tell fortunes and read draams like a book.

"Well, thinks I, yew may be a wise man, but I 'ont touch my hat to yew, nor pass the seal o' day like a hape o' silly fules du. Yow don't know me, though I du yew.

"So I parst him, and jest gan him a kinder peep outer the corner of me laft eye.

"In a moment he clapped his eyes onter me, just for a' the worl' like a tarrier dawg from under his shucky brows.

"Lor, maaster, I did feel some bad tu. I know'd in a jiffy that he'd put a spell on me, and I wint in and had a pinter ole ale to kinder pick me up a bit.

"This took place at half arter tew on the Thursder, because when he put the spell on me, I reccomember glancing at the blue-faced clock on the old Market Cross.

"Well, nex' daay, on the Frider, jist at that time,

I kim over all of a shake and dudder, but I put it down to the throsy wather, 'cause we'd had a storm thet mornin', and it was wheelin' roun' to give us another spell werry sune.

"Well, there I wuz, duddering like a man with the ager, though the wather was rite hot and close. I wuz that sick and bad, I couldn't keep right-up on my feet, and hed to lay down jest were I dropped.

"I'd got it sure enough, the old warmint had cast a spell on me for not a-noticin' him. And so it went on day arter day, so that I rite dreaded half arter tew a-comin'.

"Well, I told our maaster, and he say, 'Well, bor, I'll tell yew how yew kin git outer that. To-morrow,' he say, 'I'll drive you up to Walsham, and du yew go to old X—— (the wise man), and tell him how yew fare ivery day, and ax him to gan yew a bottle o' suthin' to put you right.'

"Well, to make my mardle short, I went.

"Lor, he fared to know what I'd cum arter. 'Put out yar tongue,' he say. I poked out savirel inches, 'cause I've got a pretty long lolliper, but bless you he hardly look on t'ut; he clapped his eyes onter mine and mumbled suthin', and I hard suthin' go crack in me stummick, and I knowed I wuz cured.

"He'd atook the spell off.

"Course he gan me a bottle o' stuff, but that wuz on'y make-believe, the trick wuz dun when he clapt his eyen on mine. I never felt bad no more arter that."

Viator. "My good friend, I'm afraid your liver was out of gear, and that pint of old ale made matters worse. Next day you had your dinner of fat pork, eh? Yes; well, then you were sick and giddy after it, and frightened yourself into the belief that the spell of the 'evil eye' had been cast upon you. Natural results from natural causes, aided by a great share of pure imagination.

"Why should X—— have any more power over you than any other man?"

Iceni. "I ain't no more superstitious than other folks, but yew don't perhaps know that old X—— wuz born in chime hours; he is the seventh son of a seventh son, and if that don't constitoot a 'wise man,' then there never wuz one."

Viator. "What are chime hours, friend, and what power do they confer on persons born in them?"

Iceni. "Fower, eight, and twalve are the chimes, and folks born in them hours can see hytersprites, and fairies, and ghosts, and such-like. Besides that they are born lucky, and thet's better'n bein' born with a silver spune in yer mouth.

"Yew smile, maaster. P'raps yew don't believe in ghosts an' things?"

Viator. "Well, scarcely; do you?"

Iceni. "I can't say as I've a seen a human ghost, but I have seen the Horning ghost in the Long Lane—thet's the ghost of a dickey (donkey) yer know.

"I wuz coming from Walsham one night in the

winter-time, and I don't know how it wuz, but suthin' fare tu say to me 'look behind.'

"Well, I knowed it had jest gone twalve, and I also knowed what Shakespeare say about that there hour. He say, if you recommember, 'Now is the berwitchin' hour o' nite, when graveyards yarn, and up cum the dade.'

"Well, although I knowed all that, I must, fule like, look roun', 'cause I fancied I could hear sumthin' go clickerty click, clickerty click, behind me.

"Sure 'nuff there came a white dickey lopin' along the road, all alone.

"I felt a bit scaart, and my old hobby pricked up har lugs as much as to say, 'Hello, 'hu's this a-follerin' me?'

"Presently I pull up short like, and the white dickey he pull up tu. Then w'en I go on, he go on, and w'en I stop, he stop. So, thinks I, yew ain't no ghost, anyhow.

"Then a brite idee cum inter me hid. 'I'll go back and see 'hu's dickey it is.'

"So I tarned roun' and back I go, and when I'd got almost up to the white dickey, who stud right in the middle o' the road facing me, my ole hobby stopped short, and nearly hulled me outer the cart. Poor old girl, she whinney'd wi' fright, and roun' she come of her own accord, and along the lane she go as hard as she could clap her fower huffs to the ground.

"But it worn't no use; this here white dickey sune

began to shorten the distance, and ivery time I looked roun' it was nigher.

"Lort, I felt all of a muck sweat, and I know me eyeballs stood out so that anyone might have chopped 'em of wi' a hook.

"Closer it cum, and closer; and when I looked roun' agin, it was jest behind, with smoke comin' outer its nosterels like out of a fiery furnace, and I du believe there wuz a little pink flame with it, but thet I ain't sure about, 'cos I wuz upset. But this I du know, the smell o' sulphur was right powerful!

"I pulled old Cally—thet's short for California—inter the deke, and past came this here white dickey, and sure 'nuff it wuz a ghost arter all, for I could see every bar of a gate by the roadside rite trew its maizey body.

"My ha'r must 'av riz on me hid, for orf went me hat. Away went the dickey up the Long Lane leading past the church to the village, and away went old Cally arter it, full tare, and thinks I wot's agoen to happen nixt.

"Why, it came to an ind like a flash. When the dickey come to the chu'chyard wall it plumped trew it jest as easy as I could poke my finger trew a pat of butter, and wot's more, it didn't distarb a single stoon of the thick wall.

"Yew may laff, maaster, but nex' mornin' when I went ter look for my hat—'cause I dussen't go back that night—I took a good wiew o' the chu'chyard wall,

and there worn't a hole in it nowhere, and not a single print of a dickey's huff in the roadway!

"Ah! yow may laff!"

Viator. "Well, my friend, I can scarcely repress a smile, because much of your adventure might be accounted for in a natural manner, and a little sifting at the time would probably have eliminated all traces of the supernatural, however strong the smell of sulphur might have been in your imagination."

Iceni. "Blarm my carcridge, maaster, if yew'd a bin with me yow'd ha' smelt sulphur tu, I warrant ye, an' if that sight hadn't amade yew dudder tu, well, I'd a eat my old hat—poke, verge, and band. Yew don't believe in no ghosts, then? Ha' *yow* iver sin one?"

Viator. "Perhaps I have, and perhaps I have not, but if you will give me your attention for a few minutes, I will relate a curious incident that occurred during my tramp round the Cornish coast on a sketching tour.

"I was in the Land's End district, and during the day had made three or four sketches, beside walking some sixteen or eighteen miles over rough cliff paths.

"About six p.m. I reached T——ne, and going to the little inn asked if they could provide me with a chop or steak and some tea, also with a bed. Yes, they could make me very comfortable in every way.

"‘Very well, let my meal be steak, and I would like it at seven,’ I said to the hostess, ‘and while you are preparing it I will walk down to the cliff and see your famous Logan Rock.’

"Away I trudged to the mighty cliffs, only a few minutes' walk away, and gazed out over the sunlit sea, admiring its deep purple blue, and thinking what a short distance a mile is when viewed over water and from a height. This thought was caused by my eyes being arrested by the beautiful tower of the Longship Lighthouse, perched upon a rocky little islet like some pale seabird resting in its flight.

"Then amid the great masses of rugged rocks I sought my quest—the Logan Rock—found it, logged or rocked it, clambered down from the dizzy eminence, and regained the rocky edge of the cliff panting for breath. I sat down on the part of a rock near the meandering footpath.

"Twenty minutes to seven, my watch tells me—just time for a few minutes' rest and half a pipe of tobacco.

"The surroundings charmed me, and I forgot the flight of time, until an unresponsive draw at my pipe told me my tobacco was out, and my time also.

"I rose and straightened myself up for my walk back to the inn. Out came my watch again. Five minutes to seven.

"I stepped from the tall rock and was about to take the path, when I saw a coastguardsman, not a hundred yards away, coming towards me, but with his eyes steadily bent seawards.

"He had not seen me, and knowing my propensity for chatting with seafaring men, I mechanically stepped behind my friendly rock again, and resumed my seat,

hoping to avoid the gallant son of Neptune by his passing me by unobserved.

"I waited a minute—two—but he did not walk past, so I rose and peeped round the rock, but no coastguard was to be seen. There was the winding solitary path, with nobody upon it!

"‘How the dickens did he disappear?’ I asked myself; but not being ready with an answer, dismissed the subject, putting my best foot foremost to the inn, which I reached ten minutes late.

"Everything was ready for me, even to a nice dish of early potatoes, for it was June, and I enjoyed my meal greatly after my day's exertions.

"Then about eight o'clock I strolled into the bar parlour, where I chatted with several neighbouring farmers and fishermen who were assembled for the usual evening's gossip.

"Presently I quietly turned the topic of conversation into an inquiry on superstition in those parts, and a most interesting one it proved to be.

"One old fellow was well up in charms, and I gathered a great deal of quaint information from him, especially charms for stopping bleeding, fevers, toothache, rheumatism, etc.

"The charms consisted of repeating peculiar quasi-religious formulæ a certain number of times, after which, in due course, the ailment is supposed to leave the sufferer. Just a couple, and I will resume my story. Here is the charm against toothache.

“ ‘As Jesus passed by He saw Peter sitting on a marble stone, and Jesus said, “What aileth thee?” And Peter replied, “Oh, my Lord, toothache.” And Jesus said, “Take this, and thou shalt never more have toothache.” ’

“ This must be repeated nine times by the charmer.

Charm for a Burn or Sore.

“ ‘ Christ was of a Virgin born,
And He was pricked by a thorn ;
And it did never hele (canker),
And I trust in Jesus this never will.’

“ Then we chatted upon the efficacy of the ‘ dead hand,’ in which the Cornish have great faith. Passing the hand of a dead person of the opposite sex nine times over wounds, eczema, scrofula, sore throat, and fifty other maladies is believed by the West country folk to be marvellously efficacious, and nearly all the working classes have implicit faith in it. Sufferers often walk several miles to a dead body, in order to be cured by its clammy, clay-cold hand. It is evidently a faith cure, and they will hear nothing said against it.

“ Well, after the conversation had been continued upon these peculiar themes for some time we gradually drifted to ghosts and other shadowy visitants.

“ Of course I laughed at the idea, but one old fellow, as a mouthpiece for the rest, remarked :

“ ‘ ‘Ee may laugh, but there’s many a gashly (ghastly)

thing marches abroad in the night that would frite 'ee to death. I tell 'ee what 'tis, maister, I wouldn't cross Goonhilly Downs after ten o'clock at night not for a whole hatvull of gold, so there be for 'ee. Yu may laugh, but let 'im bide; p'r'aps 'ee doan't believe in ghosts?'

"'Believe in ghosts? No, I do not,' I replied, 'or I should fancy I saw one this very evening.'

"'Where be it tu?' came in a chorus from those present.

"Then I related my experience of the vanishing coastguard as I sat by the rocky cliff, and how he had disappeared suddenly, leaving no trace behind, nor any means of escape that I could discover, unless he took a straight leap of thirty or forty yards to the beach below.

"'What sorter man did 'un look, maister?' asked an old boat-owner.

"I described him as a shortish, thick-set man of about thirty-five to forty. Very broad shoulders, short neck, and a black beard.

"'Ee's seed 'un,' said one.

"'It be 'ee, sure,' cried another.

"'That be Garge Shipley!' exclaimed mine host.

"'Who is George Shipley?' I asked, surprised at the comments.

"'W'y, 'ur be chief boatman here. 'Ur died of appleplexity this marnin'!'

"It appeared there were only three coastguards

stationed in the place: one of them a clean-shaven man was present; another, a Scotchman, had a sandy beard and moustache; so the third must have been the one I saw on the cliff some hours *after he was dead!*

"To make sure, they took me over to the poor fellow's cottage there and then, and his wife turning back the sheet disclosed to me the features of my ghostly visitant."

"There!" exclaimed Iceni in triumph, "now yu fare to believe in ghosts arter all, and so du all folks or common-since."

Viator. "But having common-sense, Iceni, I do not altogether believe my eyesight. Might it not have been some other man dressed in uniform I saw—some one who knew a means of descending to the beach, even down the high cliff, which looked to a stranger sudden death to attempt?"

"No, Iceni, this does not strengthen my belief in ghosts, although it certainly was a very strange experience."

CHAPTER VIII.

CURIOUS WAGERS AND FEATS.

MY publishers, wishing this to be an eminently proper book, wish me to abstain from the mention of drinking feats. The reader will therefore take the eating feats dry, a little salt taking the place of our national beverage—beer.

There used to be a giant in the employ of Mr. Palmer of Walcot, a fellow standing six feet high in his stockings, who was not a shambling fellow like most giants, but a man of great strength. All through the harvest he did the work of two men, taking up two sheaves of wheat on his fork throughout the day as easily as others did one. His appetite and drinking powers were commensurate to his height and strength, in fact, he was "a jolly good man all round."

On one occasion a gentleman had a mind to see him eat, and had a steak weighing two pounds and a half cooked for him. When it was set before him the giant with jovial face remarked :

"Well, thanky maaster, this 'ull be the fust real

square meal I've had t' harvest. I hope yow'll stand a drop o' beer tu woish it downen?"

"Oh, certainly, I suppose a man like you can manage a couple of quarts?"

"Can I du a coupler quarts? Lor luv yer, maaster, jest try yow me and see, and if I don't gan it a shaking in one go I'm a Dutchman."

The half-gallon was brought in in a tin can, when the giant with a "Well, maaster and gentlemen all, here's good health," put it to his lips, and after a long big drink replaced the can on the table, upside down!

In twenty minutes the whole of the steak and a two-pound loaf were hidden in the giant's capacious maw, and as he lay back and wiped his mouth with the back of his hand, he remarked that "he felt comfortabeller than he had done all harvest," and with his can replenished he sat and sang in turn with his comrades the whole evening.

Teetotalers will probably hold up their hands in feigned horror at these feats of guzzling and eating, but they must remember that these unwholesome exhibitions can also be given by members of their own fraternity.

Tea drinking appears to be a very innocent enjoyment, but when carried to excess may be made nearly as unsightly a performance as beer drinking.

Cases are on record of persons actually drinking themselves to death by strong infusions of tea, as was

the case with Hazlett, the great Shakespearian commentator. He, poor fellow, became such a slave to the habit—drinking it incessantly brewed in a great jug—that he poisoned himself with it, and from its baneful influences went to an untimely grave.

In the village of Swanton Abbot, as far back as 1832, the writer's father witnessed a tea-drinking feat which probably is unsurpassed.

For a trifling wager a man in the Weavers' Arms (the weavers are extinct now) undertook to drink fifty-two cups of tea within an hour, and succeeded in accomplishing the feat, although he was apparently intoxicated or rendered foolish by the liquor. His time was actually fifty-two minutes—exactly a cup per minute.

The tea—at eight shillings a pound—was prepared from two ounces of tea, and one and a half pounds of sugar, while each cup held a full quarter pint, so that six and a half quarts had to be consumed in the accomplishment of the great teetotal feat.

Norfolk being noted for its savoury sausages, there is no wonder that many disgusting feats have been performed by way of wagers in consuming them.

Three and even four pounds have been eaten at a sitting, and on one occasion a gormandizing carpenter essayed the feat of swallowing five pounds or *thirty* sausages.

He came very near accomplishing the gigantic task, breaking down at the twenty-ninth!

The feat nearly cost the glutton his life, for had it

not been for the timely arrival of Dr. Fremow, of Worstead, with his apparatus, he would undoubtedly have succumbed.

On another occasion the same man—his name is not given as his relatives still live in Worstead—for a wager of a new smock, attempted the feat of swallowing a score of new hot cross-buns, straight from old baker Bean's oven, and drinking half a gallon of old ale in half an hour.

He compassed the feat, but when the buns swelled with the ale the stupid fellow was very near bursting, and might have ruptured himself internally had not the doctor again come to his assistance in the nick of time.

This so alarmed the man that he never again indulged in feats of gluttony; as he put it, "Arter that I wuz never able to look a Good Frider bun in the faace agin."

The writer's father used to tell a funny tale concerning a sausage-eating feat which occurred at the inn at Scottow.

Some men, sitting in the Horseshoes, were boasting of their appetites and powers of digestion, when one of them averred he could eat, at a meal, four pounds of the richest pork sausages they could bring him, and that instead of their upsetting his liver he would go about his business next day as blithe as any of them.

Those present clubbed together and raised the necessary funds for purchasing the twenty-four little "pokes o' mistry," and at eight in the evening true to

time W—— strolled into the inn prepared to commence his undertaking.

No money stake was wagered, those contributing to the feast being content either to see a great feat of gluttony performed or a comrade made desperately ill—it mattered little which—they simply wanted a little excitement.

The table was spread and the feast commenced, the buxom hostess having undertaken to fry the sausages in batches of half a dozen, so as to be nice and hot for the eater.

W—— called for a quart of ale, and commenced his task in a very leisurely manner, his plate being flanked by a loaf of white bread, not too new. Much vinegar and mustard were also taken, as is usual with a Norfolk man when eating any kind of meat or herrings.

The onlookers viewed the glutton in silence—no one was allowed to chaff or interfere with him in any way.

One after one they were eaten, until nine had disappeared, with a fair amount of bread and all the ale, when W—— ordered his tankard to be refilled, and turning to his mates said :

“Yew ’ont mind my leavin’ the rume a minute?”

“Not at all, not at all,” they chorused, and out he strode.

Five minutes—ten minutes—fifteen minutes elapsed, but W—— did not return, and jokes began to be bandied about as to his liver being upset with the greasy food.

Then as he did not return two of those present went in search of him, but lo! he had vanished.

While they were calling for him by name, and searching the outbuildings, a boy arrived with a note, which he handed to the landlord, who having read it burst into a great fit of laughter, making the old rafters ring again. When he had sufficiently recovered his equanimity he read the following little epistle to the wondering folks present.

“DERE MATES,

“Thank yoo wery much for the goode super I hav jest had. I don’t keer for no more, in fackt, I never ete so menny in my life afore. Finish them betwene yoo, orlso the quart of ail I orderd.

“Yors wery cumfertable in bedd,

“W——”

Although many men of middle age will remember old Mountjoy and the walking feats he used to perform in London during the ’seventies, but few will remember the feats he performed in his native city of Norwich during the ’forties. We therefore give two of them.

At De Caux’s Ranelagh Gardens, in 1840, John Mountjoy undertook to pick up *with his mouth*, without allowing his knees to touch the ground, one hundred eggs placed a yard apart, bring them to a bucket of water, and drop them in. Then to finish up he was

to leap over fifty hurdles four feet high and placed ten yards apart, the whole to be performed in one hour.

This seems an impossible feat when we find that to pick up the eggs nearly six miles had to be traversed, during which two hundred halts and turns had to be made. But John knew his powers, and finished his allotted task in fifty-eight minutes fifty-six seconds.

Another feat performed in June, 1840, was one of great endurance; one which gave a forecast to the wonderful staying powers of this celebrated Norfolk pedestrian, who, when between seventy and eighty years of age could cover fifty miles a day during a whole week.

The great task of which we are about to speak was undertaken for a wager quite unworthy of such an amount of endurance and exertion as had to be displayed by the pedestrian—a wager of a paltry five-pound note. The task was, that Johnny undertook to walk for six consecutive days, from the Shirehall Tavern, Norwich, to Symond's Gardens, Yarmouth, and back, *twice* each day—that is, seventy-six miles per diem, or a total distance of 456 miles for five sovereigns!

It must be remembered that this performance took place on the *highway*, a very different task to one undertaken on a covered racing track.

Mountjoy commenced his walk at four a.m. on Monday, June 22nd, 1840, and his arrival and departure at both Norwich and Yarmouth were watched with great enthusiasm by vast crowds of excited people.

During the week several young men went with him to Yarmouth and back, from Norwich, or *vice versa*, being pleased to say that they had walked thirty-eight miles in a day, but when, in the afternoon a like distance had to be covered, *not one* was found with stamina enough to respond to Johnny's invitation to see the day out with him.

As the time approached for the termination of the match, so the public excitement grew, until it was at fever heat.

On the Friday night, Mountjoy completed his walk just before midnight, and on arriving at Norwich, immediately went to bed and had two hours and a half sleep, setting off on his last day's tramp at 3.40 on Saturday morning.

He was back from Yarmouth at 1.40 p.m., having walked the thirty-eight miles in ten hours.

John's was a pure heel and toe style, without the shadow of a trot, and it was not so much his pace—for he was by no means a fast walker—as his mechanical, monotonous, untiring plodding, kept up hour after hour, that gave him such wonderful mileage.

Fast walkers would go right away from him, but fatigued with their exertions would have to rest, and so lose time, but Johnny kept along at the same steady swing, hour after hour, as tireless as an automaton figure.

A rest of fifty minutes in Norwich, and at 2.30 he was again on the road.

At night, a vast concourse of people lined the road from the Foundry Bridge to the Shirehall Tavern, while hundreds proceeded up the Thorpe Road to meet the pedestrian before he reached the city. At half-past eleven those along the Thorpe Road caught sight of the hero swinging along, accompanied by many Yarmouth people on horseback and in gigs.

It was only with great difficulty that a clear course could be kept for him, but he ultimately succeeded in crossing the bridge and making his way up Rose Lane. In the meantime, the people who had journeyed to Thorpe, upon their return demanded free toll, and being refused, the toll-keepers were knocked down and the gate smashed, and the crowd swept on to the Shirehall Tavern, which Mountjoy reached at 11.40, having successfully accomplished a very remarkable feat.

CHAPTER IX.

BROADLAND VALENTINES.

DWELLERS amid the watery wastes, two or three generations since, were an eminently practical people—straightforward, bluff, and honest, but without a particle of poetry in their natures.

Valentines they knew of and thoroughly believed in, but they were not the valentines of the close of her glorious Majesty Queen Victoria's reign.

"Walentins were all wery well in my young days, bor," remarked a nonogenarian, "but they worn't them fribbulous bits o' paper ov all mander of colors stuck together, with little bits of gays and faltheralls what they sind now.

"When I wuz a gal we didn't hev none o' them there peaper things what are no good at all—yew can't eat 'em or drink 'em, and they're no use only to look on.

"We used to hev nice bags o' things sent, and little hampers of good things what yew could eat and drink, and even great tarnups used to be scuped out and filled wi' all mander'er useful things.

"Bah! the older the warld get the sillier it get tu!

But wi' its peaper rubbish, and its fine dresses, and great tall hats, and make-believe fine manners and framing speech, it ain't no better than when I wuz a gal. Folks knew theirselves then and were comfortable and happy, and that's more then yew kin say for the present generation of fal-lal-fribbles!"

There! what do you think of that for an old lady of ninety-three? Such a speech set the writer thinking and asking questions, especially about valentines, and he has come to the conclusion that the old lady was certainly correct in deploring the decadence of the old custom of sending valentines in the Norfolk fashion.

The old lady lived when the custom was at its best, but before she died it had so declined as to be practically obsolete—save for the sending of a few paper confections either of a lacey or "comic" character: the latter kind even having so far degenerated as to forget their missive to cause laughter as to become vehicles for imparting pain, slander, and unpleasant feeling.

Probably in a few more years the extinguisher will be put completely over St. Valentine—who after all appears to be no man's child—for no one appears to know who he was—and by the middle of the century he will be classed with the Mastodon, Pterodactyl, and Dodo.

The Saint has become a sinner.

In old days St. Valentine was a most mysterious being. One heard a tap at their door on February 14th, and on opening it there would be a parcel, hamper,

or what-not on the threshold. These would contain substantial gifts—gloves, handkerchiefs, purses, or other handy articles, or dairy produce—geese or ducks—a ham—smoked pork or other comestibles, but *never the name of the sender!*

Then the puzzle was “Whoever sent this?”

Then could the good squire or wealthy resident prepare his or her welcome valentines for the poor; but now, alas, the charm is broken, the custom degenerated, and paper, often mockery and vulgarity, take their places.

Many yet live who can remember the good old Norfolk custom of sending huge turnips on Valentine’s day. These turnips were neatly scooped out and their pulp replaced with gifts worth the having.

A turnip or swede does not appear to be large enough to contain a meal for ten or a dozen persons, but such a feast has frequently been concealed in a big bulbous root.

Two ducks, a fowl, and three pounds of sausages were the contents of one large turnip.

Another enormous turnip contained a twelve-pound turkey and its “trimmings”—four pounds of sausages.

Rabbits, butter, pork-cheeses, and many other edibles were frequently enclosed in these hollow turnips.

One of the largest turnips Valentine ever sent was in 1832. It was stuffed with a hare, a brace of rabbits, a brace of partridges, a brace of woodcock, a brace of snipe, and a bottle of old cognac!

All these good things were contained in a single turnip, which was of a very symmetrical form, measuring forty-four inches in circumference, and hollowed out till but little more than the outer skin was left.

What a nice little ornament for one's doorstep—and larder!

In 1828, Mr. John Shephard, of Erpingham, drew a turnip from one of his fields which weighed twenty-three pounds, and measured forty-two inches in circumference. This gave him a splendid opportunity for a piscatorial valentine, which he embraced by cramming into it the following fish.

A pike weighing five pounds, another of three pounds, a fine perch of three pounds, another of one pound, a tench of two pounds, another of one pound, and an eel of two and a half pounds—in all seventeen pounds of fish. This very curious valentine was sent to Dr. Caltop of Great Surrey Street, Southwark, per coach. A very handy valentine to *turn up* for a hungry man, eh?

In 1831, Michael Rust, of the Greyhound, Swaffham, sent to Mr. Oaken, of Maidstone, a large turnip of the Beffin stock, taken from Mr. Bulling's farm. It was hollowed out in the usual way, and lined with the following useful articles for a family with vigorous appetites: a brace of fine hares, a brace of beautiful pheasants, and a brace of plump partridges—thirty pounds of game.

The present reached its destination in safety, and

the turnip shell was long preserved as a curiosity, such a gigantic bulb never having been seen in Kent before. It measured forty-five inches round, and was very symmetrical.

The old lady started this short chapter, and we will allow her to close it with an anecdote. In her young days the Methodists were called Ranters, from their declamatory mode of preaching, and before educated men occupied their pulpits, uneducated "local" preachers, men of good intent but guiltless of eloquence, frequently occupied the rostrum, and gave the congregation "sermons" in the vernacular. Here is a specimen related by the old lady to the writer, and which we will call

Pulpit Eloquence.

The place was a Methodist Chapel on the coast, and the preacher, a teamerman on a farm in the parish, who, beaming round on his hearers, commenced :

"My dare frinds, I am spared once more, etc., etc.

"Now I thowt as I kem along the canser this mawnin', well, now there's that chapel, thet's like a great pot hung on the hake over a gret fierce fire—that's the davel, sin, and all mander o' wickedness!

"Then yow, my frinds, are like onto dumplin's in this here gret pot—yow are in hot water and no mistake!

"An' wot is this here hot water? Jest the same as the flames, my frinds—it's sin, oncomfortable sin!

"An' there yow bob about and bob about, but yow can't get out on't.

"An' then you ax me, 'And where do *yow* kem in?'

"Well, my dare frinds, I'll tell yer.

"I'm the spune a stirrin' on yer up, and a stirrin' on yer up, and tryin' to get yer outer the hot water and save yer.

"Now, friends, 'on't yer let me help yer? Du! du, du as I tell yer ter du, and I'll get yer out as sure as yow air the lost dumplin's and I'm the savin' spune!"

Could eloquence from the pulpit go further? Could picturesque similitude transcend such a declamatory effort?

CHAPTER X.

THE PILGRIMS OF THE BROADS.

WILEY GREEN reckoned he knew all about the Broads, and so he may have done, but he did not know what it was to cater for a big crowd of sight-seers from the Midlands. Wiley might know the nature of his birth district well, but to know human Nature, in the lump, is another matter.

Wiley had wherries and yachts at his beck, so he said to his partner :

“Let us advertise for a party and take them around the broads at so much a head. Simple enough, you know. Just leave it to me, and I’ll work it out!”

So Wiley advertised for a party, and in due time away came a letter from, well, Tackford, in Yorkshire—they don’t spell it so, but no matter.

Forty-five pilgrims signified their willingness to try a water trip, and all arrangements were duly made.

Wiley was in ecstasies, but his partner shook his head.

On a certain day in June two large wherries, two large yachts, and a small one were ready for the pilgrims, and at a stated time down trooped the party.

It was a mixed party—very mixed—men and women of all classes, from the town councillor and well-to-do merchant to the mill hand out of work. Just such a medley as accompanied Chaucer to Canterbury.

Chaucer got on well with his company because he was *not* catering for them, but Wiley had an anxious time because he *was*. Still, like Chaucer, Wiley Green was “a chiel amang them takin’ notes,” with a view “to prent ’em,” so he was on the look-out for plenty of incident—and he got it.

“Now,” said Wiley to Rogers, his partner, a placid little man with clean-shaven face and long hair, “they are here, but how the dickens are we to stow them?”

“Just look at that!” said Rogers, pointing to a man weighing about twenty stone, “you can’t ask *him* to sleep on a bit of a shelf-berth. Where will you fix him? Now, you are boss of the show—boss away, and I’ll help you.”

Wiley’s blood ran cold as he was surrounded by a seething crowd clamouring to know fifty things in as many seconds.

What was one guide among so many tongues?

On river craft accommodation is limited, and Wiley knew it, and anticipated a crowd that he could stow away like sardines, but as he said to his partner:

“Who’d have thought this crowd of blessed aristocrats was to be let loose on us?”

“Where shall *I* sleep, Mr. Green?” piped a tall, thin dame, “out on her own,” as the lads called it.

"Can I and my wife have a cabin to ourselves?" said a portly man with a face like an over-ripe tomato.

"Mr. Rogers," said a pompous man with a big voice, "I must ask you to be good enough to find accommodation for my companion, Dr. C—— and myself in the same cabin, and near the bath room!"

"Bath room!" shuddered Rogers to himself, "what do they want for thirty-five shillings the trip?"

"I say, old fellow," said a jovial-looking individual, seizing Wiley by the arm, "I've a couple of thumping portmanteaus, where shall I put them?"

"Where are they?" said Wiley, with some misgivings as to where he could stow the lumber of the cheerful pilgrim.

Just there, near the top of the load, look!" said the pilgrim, pointing to a railway wagon piled with luggage to a dangerous height. "Those two yellow ones."

Wiley nearly collapsed.

Did they take his fleet for pantechnicons, or floating furniture depositories?

Oh dear! what a terrible time Messrs. Green and Rogers did have for the next two hours to be sure.

The perspiration stood in great beads on Wiley's forehead, while Rogers went jellified at the awful share he had taken in the responsibilities of the next few days.

If any man can realise what "Pandemonium let loose" means, that man should be Wiley.

If any man knows the meaning of "Babel," it should be his partner Rogers.

For two mortal hours the hurly-burly went on, and then something like order of sleeping was arranged—some small ones two in a berth, some large ones claimed for themselves a berth intended for two—some on the floor, and some on the tables—but *somehow* all were accommodated.

To one noble band of young fellows, chums from a cotton mill, Wiley will ever be grateful—they volunteered to sleep in the long cabin of the “Trillion,” on the floor, on the lockers, on the table, on their heads, anywhere if they could only be together. This greatly relieved the congestion, or mutiny would probably have broken out.

That Eiffel tower of luggage was jammed into a big flat-bottomed cargo boat, and with an old man to quant it, followed the fleet everywhere. Like a nightmare, it turned up at all times of the night, and brought much misery both to the partners and the pilgrims.

Why did they not tow it?

Because none of the pilgrims would have such an incubus swinging behind their craft.

Let go!

And the fleet of five vessels, manned by a crew of nine willing fellows, were off.

Wiley, in the smaller yacht “Lando,” brought up the rear, and as reach after reach was negotiated, he felt more comfortable; he even smiled, and thought after all he could give the pilgrims a good show for their money, without a great deal of inconvenience to

himself, now that he had the huge composite party afloat; but alas! his troubles had not yet begun.

This he quickly discovered when he asked Dick "Which craft are the potatoes aboard?"

"Taters, Mr. Green? Why, you dou't mean a full sack of 'em?"

"Yes I do," anxiously exclaimed Wiley, "they stood against the quay wall."

"And there they stand now, maaster," said Dick cheerfully, "for I see 'em there as we left, not 'nowin' 'em to be ourn."

Wiley groaned as he loosed the painter of the dinghy towing behind, for he knew there was nothing but to go back for them. "Three miles pulling back to Yarmouth, and then ten from the quay to Stokesby!" and he groaned again.

"Shell 'ar coom and gie thee a pull back?" said one of the bold young mill hands, looking at the disconsolate Wiley, and realising that he had a tough job on hand.

Wiley jumped at the offer, inwardly blessing the young fellow, and away they went.

This was at mid-day.

At seven p.m. two haggard men reached Stokesby, having rowed thirteen miles against the tide. They were Wiley and his friend Bob, the mill hand. Not bit nor drop had passed their mouths in all those hours, *but*, and that was a source of delight to Wiley, the pilgrims had had their first meal, and being ravenous with fasting, it had passed off well.

Some of the swells asked for serviettes, and wanted to know if *wine* was included!

The rude or rather crude mariners waited at table not quite to the edification of the "big bugs," as our American cousins call swelldom; but those who did not come out on the Broads expecting floating Hotels Cecil were much amused at the awkwardness of the men.

It was delicious to see them bowing and cutting sea scrapes as they handed the viands round.

"Hev another pertater, mum? they are some of old Pember's best," says the nautical waiter.

"Yes 'um," says another, "the bread is a bit warm; it's bin knockin' about on the foredeck since we left Yarmouth."

"No, sir," says a third old veteran, "there ain't no more gravy, Sam capsized it coming up the companion," etc.

"Yes 'um, the salad is nice and fresh," says old Joe, the oldest hand aboard; "you see we always washes it over the side in the river hereabouts, 'cos it's a bit salty, and that makes it a bit flavourable."

"No, sir," says the same worthy in answer to an interrogation from a gentleman, "they ain't many dead cats about here, and if there waz, excuse me, sir, they wouldn't get in among the wittles 'ithout our seein' 'em!"

Well, after a good meal everyone seemed contented, and "the boys," as the eight young companions were called, took a stroll into Stokesby; they had not far to

go as the houses came right down to the river bank.

They sat and smoked and joked till dusk, when someone brought out an ancient fiddle from a cottage and began to scrape a tune for a copper, but this was too tame for our "boys," so they fell to dancing, taking each other for partners. This also was voted tame work till a kedgy old dame came along, whose waist one of the young rascals encircled and compelled her to dance.

The old lady did not seem particularly averse, indeed, she seemed to be proud to show some of the steps of her youth. But age and breath don't *moise*, as we say in East Anglia, and the plucky old woman was soon beaten.

"Her will," she explained was good, and so were her legs, but "lork-a-mussy, it du make my ole ballers (lungs) like as if they'd bust!"

So she sat down on a pail and panted and was comforted.

The hostess of the inn next took the green, and soon half the village was standing round, gaping and guffawing. Now was the chance for "the boys" to get young partners. And they did.

Then someone found up a concertina with a cracked note in it.

"What du that matter," said a wooden-legged man; "that there note suite me nicely, that it du; when I know 'tis comin' I jest jam down my timber-toe, and that come in famous."

Gradually the older pilgrims straggled down from the yachts, then the rest of the village folk, till at last every cottage was emptied of its occupants.

Lanterns were lighted and hung on pitchforks, and by ten o'clock the yachts were as tenantless as the cottages, and "chuckleheds and mawthers" were flocking in from every house within a mile; for it was not a quiet little "at home" dance—just a mere Cinderella—but just such an affair as one sees in a painting by David Teniers, or other of the old Dutch masters so fond of portraying Boor carousals.

The noise of laughter and shouting might have been heard a mile away; and as the wealthier pilgrims were very liberal with their money, everyone had what he or she liked to drink.

Towards midnight someone set fire to a heap of faggots placed near the water's edge for the purpose, and that completed the picture.

Fifty couples were toeing it to the barbarous scraping of a half-tipsy fiddler, with only about three teeth in his old gums, and the dot and go one strains of a metallic-toned German concertina. Not that a man is compelled to have a full set of teeth to fiddle well—only he looked like a death's head more than a violinist.

It was a picture to see the ruddy glare of the fire striking on the numerous couples as they waltzed round the burning mass, throwing their shadows in long black bars right across the shimmering coruscating river.

Here was a scene that no camera could depict, and but few talented artists give more than a faint idea of. Yet the glowing scene will live in the memory of those present for many years to come.

It was simple, but the scene of a lifetime. It was not cut and dried, but simply grew and grew, till old and young were carried away by the excitement, and pilgrims, crew, villagers, and watermen vied with each other in making a memorable night, and they succeeded beyond their expectation.

Had it been planned it would have fallen flat, but it was an impromptu from the first, quite to the lighting of the bonfire, and like it, went off with a roar to the last.

Had it been Christmas instead of summer-time there might have been some misletoe about for the young people, but as there was not, *they did very well without it!*

"Up in the morning early," was Wiley and Rogers' song; for cutting ham for nearly threescore hungry folk is no sinecure. The two partners sat in their store cabin for two hours preparing for breakfast, Rogers doling out the tea and coffee, eggs and bread, jam and marmalade, while Wiley with sleeves rolled above his elbows sat in front of a huge ham and carved and carved till he was greased up to his funny bone.

Breakfast at eight, and with it a lot of complaints.

"Gent says why can't he have cocoa—he doesn't like coffee or tea."

"Some blooming toff in the 'Wildflower' says he can never eat anything but fish for breakfast, can't you get him a sole?"

And this in an inland village ten miles from the nearest town.

"Couldn't Mr. and Mrs. Highstep have a fowl cooked, or even a steak or chop, if they pay a little more?"

"The Misses Peeky *must* have brown or wholemeal bread; they never heard of white bread only being served."

Wiley, shiny with grease, and Rogers pale from want of sleep, for the catering task was a nightmare to him, looked blankly at each other.

Rogers said, "Well, I'm blowed!"

Wiley exclaimed: "I'm——," but a crash of crockery overhead cut short his exclamation as he laid back resignedly with a groan in the locker-breth he was sitting upon.

"He's saved some on 'em, Mr. Green, fower if not five," said a voice through the skylight.

"And what is broken?" asked Rogers, "and how many?"

"Plates, sir; he had about tew dozen, and slipped upon a bit of ham fat."

The pilgrims were in ecstasies at the smash, the partners the reverse, for their stock of crockery was limited.

Off again, and Acle Bridge was successfully negotiated; then a pause, during which the fleet was moored along the river wall.

Certain beefsteak, also fruit pies, had been ordered at Acle town; also threescore loaves, but where were they? They should have been at the Bridge in the baker's cart by eleven o'clock, it was now past twelve. A messenger was presently sent, who returned with the news that a fair was being held, and the promised pies and bread would be down by one o'clock; they were still in the oven.

More grumbling. Some wanted to see a country fair, others wanted to up sail and get along. Another detachment, principally ladies, wanted the fleet to stay where it was while they went for a row, and the partners felt like the old man and his son, to say nothing of the donkey. Wiley wanted to please everyone, but how was he to do it?

He rang a bell on the river wall and assembled the straggling pilgrims, asking them what was their wish. Put to the vote the ballot came out "Go on." But some of "the boys," hearing of the fair, had *already* started for the roundabouts and swings.

Resolved that we go on, and leave a yacht and two hands to bring them along to our next camping ground, St. Benet's Abbey.

Lunch at two p.m., and at three o'clock four of the fleet were hoisting sail, when a big dust and a loud noise was noticed some distance up the Acle road.

Then several flying figures were perceived emerging from the dust—it lay on the dry roads an inch deep—and ever and anon these figures were joined by others,

whereupon a battle took place. Then half a dozen separated themselves from the rest and indulged in short runs and violent antics.

What could it mean?

Out came several pairs of field glasses, which the pilgrims carried, and someone exclaimed:

"Why, it's a fight, and those few men are throwing stones to keep off a score or more men and boys."

"By Jove!" sung out Wiley Green of the "Berold" "it's 'our boys' with half Acle after them. Come on!" And jumping ashore, followed by fifteen or twenty of the pilgrims and crew, he dashed along the river path to the rescue.

The sight of the reinforcements was sufficient, for the mob wavered and then stopped in a crowd, while "our boys" regained their vessel, the "Trillion," escorted by the pilgrims.

Two had a black eye apiece, one a lump on his cheek, and another one on his head so large that he could not get his cap on.

"Whatever is the matter?" asked everyone at once.

"Oh, nowt," said the spokesman. "Bob kissed someone else's girl by mistake, and her fellow fought him—a big strong seafaring chap, double Bob's size, but Bob was too clever for him, and gave him more than he received. So another sailor lad struck Bob, and then 'ah took it up, and very sune Job and Hacker and the tothers jined in, and we had a regular free fight.

"It wer joost proper, on'y they got too many for us

like, and we had to retreat. They followed us right away from t' town three to one, but when they saw you lads, they joost turned tail, every won of 'em.

"'Ah've gotten a black eye, and a bloody nose, and a chip oot o' me yer, but 'ah wouldn't a mist it for somethin'. 'Ah'l recollect it for years to coom, and so will soom o' they chaps, 'ah'l warrant."

Faces were sponged and a little delay occurred while the "Trillion" was being made ready to sail, but just as her sail was hauled up a lad came running along the bank with a note addressed "To the seven chaps wot come to Acle."

Its contents were somewhat strange.

"If you chaps ain't outer mi parish in wun hower from now I will bring up some mor trupes, and we will bomberd every winder in yore hole flete, becorse we know hew you air.

"So no more frum

"Yors trewly,

"The Mayer of Yarmouth wen he's atome."

The young bloods wanted to take reinforcements and drive the fishermen back to Acle, but wiser council prevailed, and the fleet sailed without waiting even "wun hower."

"Our boys" were evidently in fault, or the Yarmouth lads would not have molested them.

Wiley did not care a snap, he had got his pies and bread, and for once felt happy.

At St. Benet's Abbey the pilgrims enjoyed themselves greatly, such a queer, historic old ruin standing so solitarily in the marshes pleased them—only there was not quite enough ruin left. The sample was good, but they wanted more bulk; there was too much for the imagination and too little of the reality.

It has been said that those who feed on fancy require a good digestion; if such is the case, Wiley provided a veritable feast for the ladies of the party; he fed them on his imagination till they were satiated, but indigestion did not appear to follow.

It came about thus: while Wiley superintended the preparation of dinner, Rogers was deputed to convey the party round the ruins, and explain to them as well as he could the history of the ancient fane, and its still more ancient site, as a spot set apart for religious observances.

Rogers did fairly well, and interested the pilgrims exceedingly, so much that the ladies especially wanted to know more about the Abbey and its surroundings, and after dinner deputed two of their number to persuade "dear Mr. Wiley Green", to cicerone them round the grounds, and tell them all he knew of the legends and other matters appertaining to the place. Mr. Rogers had done his best, but they were sure Mr. Green, who had read so much of the old place, could tell them a great deal more.

Wiley's eyes glittered, and the corners of his mouth puckered as he thought what a glorious opportunity this would be to ride his hobby of imagination.

Yes, he would be very pleased to take them round, and point out a few items which his partner had omitted.

Some of the old buffers took forty winks after dinner, and made themselves very comfortable on the mattressed locker-berths. The younger men took the five dinghys and went rowing or sailing. The lovers, of which there were two or three couples, went goodness knows where, they simply vanished.

Wiley's party consisted of about a dozen, including three gentlemen, and away they went, hoping to learn from their guide much of interest. And they did.

Said Wiley: "But little now remains of the beautiful church, which formerly stood within the walled grounds of thirty-eight acres. Simply the lower portion of one side wall of the nave, and also of the northern transept, but we know from documents and drawings still extant, that it was once a very fine building crowned with a lofty central spire. Its building is said to have commenced in——"

"Oh, excuse me a moment, Mr. Green, what is this peculiar recess or niche in the wall, has it any particular significance?"

"Oh yes, madam," said Wiley to the thin elderly maiden who had interrupted him. "That is where the workmen some years since came across the skeleton

of a female with a parchment round her waist, upon which in choice Latin was inscribed the reason of her being immured here. She was taken, without a character, as a female cook, a very unusual thing in those days, and given a trial as chef to the Abbot. She does not appear to have suited. She made a hash of it, and got into a stew, and the Abbot was so wrath when he discovered her shortcomings that he ordered her to be walled up, as was the practise in those days. She is said to have been sister to Nell Cook of the Ingoldsby Legends."

A murmur of awe went round, not unmixed with approval, which greatly encouraged Wiley, who had imagined his story from the fact of seeing during one of his previous visits the remains of a sheep at the spot, whose bones were being picked by crows.

"What is that old brick tower, Mr. Green, which rises apparently from some more ancient building?" asked a lady, peering at the curious pile through her gold-rimmed pince-nez.

"That," said Wiley, "is the tower of an ancient mill built through the crown of the gateway, so that one might support the other. They are not contemporaneous—the gateway being much the older building, as you may observe."

"Is there any legend or story attached to it?" asked a mild-looking young man, whose forehead and chin both retreated at such sharp angles that his nose appeared a promontory, and gave a look of continual

surprise to his remarkable features. Imagine the ace of diamonds with a wedge-shaped section cut out of the S.W. face, and you have his ingenuous profile exactly.

"Well," quoth Wiley, "a few words may be said about the curious combination of the gatehouse and mill, but not much. Still I will tell you what I know of them.

"At one period the Monastery attached to the Abbey was simply supported by tithes, and nothing more; and as every farmer grew nothing but corn, the monks could have nothing but wheat and barley for tithes. The farmers' poverty was such that they had nothing else to offer.

"Seeing that great quantities of grain were coming in, the monks became millers, and erected the building you see before you; and there the corn, or as they called it 'poverty,' was ground. Thus you see was invented the term 'grinding poverty,' which in our day is used in quite another manner, showing that times greatly alter the significance of things."

Wiley looked around at his audience to see the effect of this flight of imagination, and noted that it was swallowed as easily as a duck might have swallowed a grain of the Abbot's wheat.

He was encouraged to try another.

"This, ladies," said Wiley, flourishing his hand towards a wall (near the gateway) pierced with long slits, "is all that remains of the once famous kitchen, whose table once groaned beneath the load of fish, fowl, and

meat imposed upon it. Monkish laugh and quip and crank have all vanished, the last joint has been roasted, the last pike (stuffed with sage and onions grown in the Monastery garden) has been baked, and not even a smell remains behind to remind us of its former glories."

"May I ask," smirked a fair damsel, "the meaning of those long holes in the wall? They appear too narrow for windows, and too long for the mere admission of air—for ventilators."

"Well, miss," commenced the unblushing Wiley, "they had many uses. Primarily they were for use as windows—no glass in those days, miss, but plenty of fresh air—secondly as vent holes to let out the volumes of steam from the great caldrons of fish on Fridays, that day being, as you know, their fast day.

"By the way, an occurrence in this kitchen gave rise to another well known saying. It so happened that the good Abbot of that day had invited old Sir John Falstaff, of whom you read so much in Shakespeare's plays, to dine with him, and have a hand at 'nap,' or whatever game was then in vogue.

"It was Friday, and a huge caldron or kettle of dainty fish was being prepared for dinner, but was for some reason not served up at the proper time. The Abbot in wrath strode away to the kitchen, flagellum in hand, to interview the chief cook.

"Imagine his dismay when he entered the kitchen and found the contents of the kettle strewn all over

the floor, one of the two servitors who was carrying it having tripped over a sandal someone had dropped.

“‘Gadzooks!’ roared the Abbot, ‘here’s a pretty kettle of fish!’ and with his flagellum he smote right and left, till the cooks and scullions howled again and fled in dismay.

“This,” chirruped Wiley, “was the origin of the saying, ‘Here’s a pretty kettle of fish!’ when an accident or uproar occurs.

“By-the-bye, I may tell you that these peculiar slits of windows—‘squints,’ as they were technically termed—served other purposes than to admit light; they effectively excluded villagers, and prevented their ingress, and also precluded the egress of the monks, some of the youngest of whom, notwithstanding their cloth—rather rough in those days—were inclined to skittishness.

“You will notice that the slits forming the very limited window space are of various widths: this one was an inch wide, the middle one two inches, and the other four inches wide.

“They were used as pike gauges. A fish filling the large aperture, when passed through head first, was reserved for the Abbot’s own table. Those filling the middle aperture were reserved for the upper brethren and officials, while those which would not pass through the inch gauge were reserved for the common or garden monks—so called from being cultivators of vegetables and herbs for the community.”

"What about the fish that went through the narrow gauge?" asked a fat little man from the North.

"Oh, those," said Wiley with a polite bow, "were given to the poor, who stood outside every Friday awaiting their dole."

Away he strode with his company to the fish-ponds, where he pointed out the ponds for the various fish.

"Here," said he, "were the tench ponds; that one was for carp, these two for eels, that for trout, and these large ones for pike."

"And what are these tree stumps set in rows between the ponds?" asked a member of the party.

"Those," responded Wiley without a moment's hesitation, "are the remains of apple, quince, and pear-trees, placed so as to overshadow the ponds and so prevent the fish having sunstroke, as in those days the summers were very hot and the ponds very fleet.

"I need hardly tell you that in those days the pike grew to an enormous size, in fact, some kept as curiosities for several generations became veritable giants. Their teeth grew amazingly, quite commensurate with their huge bodies, and they became so fierce that at certain times of the year they had to be chained to the tree stumps by a hook through the lower lip—this was to prevent them flying at the monks.

"We read, indeed, in that old black-letter tome, 'Liber Asinorum,' chap. xxiii., that 'Ye pyke of Saynte Bennet hys Abbeye be growne soe lustie they doe

y'come outen ye ponds, and doe eate ye grasse lyke unto an oxe ; moreover, ye goode Abbote, Simon de Horsteade, hath, for theyse two yeres past, playced two offe them at ye gates offe ye Abbeye during ye night, that their loude barkynge may arouse ye porter when a wearie wayfairer dothe seeke admittance.' ”

Wiley noted the effect of the extract on his listeners, and noted that it went down as comfortably and as unchallenged as mother's milk down a baby's gullet, so he enlarged a little on the subject on being asked :

“ To what length do you think those pike grew, Mr. Green? ”

“ Well, sir, a pike is a curious fish ; he appears never to get old, but continues to grow and grow year after year. Now a pike at a year would be, say, six inches long, at three years a foot, and in five years twenty inches. Then at ten years he would be, say, thirty inches, and on reaching a score years he would be at least forty inches.

“ Now suppose for each decade we allow his growth to be only ten inches—an inch per annum—he would be fifty inches long at thirty years of age and sixty at forty years ; and so if we proceed we find that a centenarian pike would be 120 inches long—that is ten feet—a foot longer than this field gate on which my hand is now resting.

“ His teeth grew like steel harrow-tines, and his scales protected him like armour, so that you may imagine when one of these brutes broke loose it must have been

a lively time for the monks, whose only means of killing the amphibious monster was with the cross-bow.

"But here we are at another interesting spot.

"These riverside foundations mark the site of the monks' washing-place—or as we should call it at the present day, their laundry.

"In times of scarcity, when the wheat crop failed, the worthy monks were fain to look about them for means of support other than the almost absent tithes.

"At such periods they took in washing, and it is on record that their ironing was remarkably well done—so that the neighbouring barons and their ladies had no hesitation in recommending them to their friends.

"Here stood the great callidarium, where they made their water hot," said Wiley, sweeping his foot round in a half circle, "and that," nodding his head to an upstanding piece of flint-work, "was the east side of their drying and mangling room; while the finished articles were packed in a small room quite overhanging the river.

"You have heard of our infamous King John losing his clothes in the Wash? Well this was the very spot where it occurred. A violent storm so flooded the Bure that the press-room floor was carried away, and with it the whole of King John's underwear. He was of course in a great rage, but that was nothing unusual with him. He was——"

"I always thought," interrupted the little fat man from the North, "that King John's clothes were lost in the Wash on the north-west coast of Norfolk."

"A popular error, my dear sir," explained Wiley, colouring a little, "this is the actual spot I can assure you, and it is to the present day called from the event the Wash."

(The mendacious guide was partly right, for it really is the spring *washing-place* for sheep, who are bundled off the ruins into the river, and there poked and hauled about with crooks and forks till they are clean.)

"But is there not some legend of love, some pretty, tender story attached to this ancient Abbey? Surely, during the rolling centuries some true heart has here found its affinity? Can you not remember some legend? Oh, do try, Mr. Green!"

This was put to Wiley by a tall thin lady of uncertain age, one of two sisters—as like as two seed peas—wrinkled and yellow.

Wiley was somewhat staggered, as love stories were not in his line, or at any rate, were not his strong point in "humming."

Still he readily replied:

"Oh, I think I can remember a legend, but I will relate it presently when we come to the spot, and in the meantime there are several other things I should like to tell you about.

This was simply subterfuge on Wiley's part to gain time and invent something befitting the place.

He had been to Père la Chaise in Paris, and had heard the story of Heloise and Abelard, but could not for the life of him remember either how it began or

how it ended. Perhaps it might come back to him as he wandered along.

"Now," said he, "from this point, with your backs to the river, you may obtain a good view of the extent of the Abbey grounds. Fancy in your minds a drawn bow: the string is represented by the River Bure, and the ruins of the outer wall, flanked by the moat, the bow itself. To your right was the hospital and boat-houses, to the left the Abbey gate, and in the centre the grand old church. Straight before us stood the postern, or little gate, leading to the palace at Ludham, the residence of the Bishop.

"We will please continue our walk along the river bank, and then turn and walk along the ruins of the outer wall encompassed by the broad moat."

"May I ask 'what is a moat?'" asked a shabby little woman, whose chin always rested on her breast except when walking, and whose underlip protruded so much that it suggested an idea for a pin-tray or shelf for bric-à-brac.

"A moat? yes, a moat is a —— eh, that is, it is used at different times for many different purposes," commenced Wiley, struggling for an idea, for his thoughts were wandering on a love story for the thin lady. "Its first use is to guard a house, or castle, or other place from sudden attack, and it was no doubt first constructed by the builders of the great wall for that purpose.

"But the monks kept their geese and ducks there,

and also used it as a swimming course, their annual swimming gala taking place there. They held the Norfolk Abbey's swimming championship for many years, and Father Tom, once for a wager with the Abbot, swam fifty lengths in six hours, a performance remaining unbeaten to the present day.

"In the winter-time it was their skating track, and was much safer, in case of accidents, than the Bure, which was very deep."

FATHER TOM, THE SKATER.

"Bone skates were the things in those days, madam. Just a narrow bone, well-rasped down, and some holes drilled through it: thongs bound them to the monks' feet, and away they went over the glassy surface at an amazing speed—great fat, burly men, whooping with delight like so many school children.

"Father Tom was champion skater, as well as swimmer, of East Anglia, and poor fellow, he eventually won the championship of all England, but in doing so, a sad accident resulted in his losing his life. Alas! poor Father Tom!"

"Oh do tell us all about it, Mr. Green!" came in a chorus from the ladies.

Wiley continued: "It was a very simple matter. He and Father Peter, of Croyland, and Father Jabez, of Glastonbury, were acknowledged to be the three fastest skaters of their day, and one severe winter it was

arranged that these three should meet at Ely in the fens, and there have a straight away race of ten miles to ascertain who was the veritable champion of all England.

“On a certain day in February, 1307, the race was duly run before a vast concourse of the greatest nobles of the land; even the King, who happened just then to be on a visit at Cambridge, honoured the occasion with his presence.

“To make a very long story short, Father Tom simply romped away from his opponents, and at the half-way post led by 300 yards; at eight miles he was 500 yards ahead and going great guns, anxious to make record time.

“As he flew over the capital black ice he turned his head to get a peep at Fathers Peter and Jabez, and in doing so he did not notice a hole in the ice in front of him. In a moment in he plumped, and his poor neck came with a terrific speed against the thin edge of the ice on the opposite side of the hole and cut his head clean off. Away went his body beneath the ice, while the head went whizzing along the surface.

“Strangely enough body and head went at the same speed, and coming to another hole in the ice, some fifty yards further on, just as the body popped up the head clapped itself on the neck and—yes, ma’am, it was indeed remarkable—Father Tom clambered out of the hole not knowing what had befallen him, and before he could pull himself together again—*literally* together

again, you will observe—the other two monks flew past him and were soon a couple of hundred yards ahead, and only two miles to the winning post!

“To do or die, Father Tom set off at his best speed, and in less than a mile had overtaken his rivals. Away and away he went, and finally won the race easily by nearly 200 yards.

“The King was delighted, and called lustily for the redoubtable Father Tom, who quickly appeared before him, and was about to kneel, but the King took him by the hand and said excitedly :

“‘By my halidame, and thou art indeed a sturdy monk ; not even icy water can check thine ardour ; hadst thou been any but one of the cassock and sandal I had made thee a Baron.’

“Father Tom stooped, and was about to kiss the royal hand, when, to the amazement of all present, his head tumbled off and rolled at the King’s feet, whither his body quickly followed it.

“It was the opinion of the court physicians of the period that, but for Father Tom bowing to the King, the wound might have ‘healed by first intention.’

“Such was life in mediæval times. Father Tom’s head was not the only one to roll at a monarch’s feet, for in those days the axe of the executioner was constantly kept bright by use.”

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“Now I must call your attention,” said Wiley, pausing

at a break in the remains of the wall, just in the centre, where the curve is at its full, "to this opening in the wall, for here formerly stood the postern gate, which gave the Abbot a short cut to his palace at Ludham."

THE STORY OF HELOARD AND ABELÖISE.

"The story I am going briefly to relate is said to have taken place when Bolleyn was Abbot, but the year I cannot give you.

"Bolleyn kept great state, for the Monastery was then in its prosperity, and retained many more persons about him than there was any need for—simply to indulge his taste in luxury and to raise him in the estimation of the barons and gentry of his see.

"Among his retinue was one—eh, let me see, oh, I remember," said Wiley, as the names of those unfortunate lovers, Abelard and Helöise, came to his mind, "his name was Heloard, a student of Oxenford, who acted as his amanuensis.

"Heloard was a young priest of fine presence, learned and of good family, and the Abbot trusted him implicitly.

"Heloard might safely have been trusted with treasure untold, or secrets of State, but still he was tempted, and found not to be proof in another direction. In short, he betrayed the trust imposed in him.

"The Abbot's brother, Hugh of Sweffling, had a daughter named Abelöise, who frequently stayed for

a week or ten days at the Abbey with her uncle, where she was thrown much into the company of Heloard, and naturally and inevitably fell in love with him, for he was what they called in those days a 'proper man.'

"Right under the Abbot's nose they made love, but he, indulgent man, had not the faintest suspicion of it, until one day the Bursar of the Monastery told him of a plot he had overheard or discovered, by which, on that very night, Heloard had planned to carry off the willing and beautiful Abelöise, renounce his priesthood, and marry her, the heiress to the Swefling domains.

"Abbot Bolleyn was surprised, incredulous; he could not, would not believe such a thing against his only niece and his young clerk of Oxenford.

"Still, at the Bursar's earnest request he promised to keep an eye on the pair during the day, and to set a watch both at the great gatehouse and the postern gate when the day faded away.

"The poor Abbot watched the couple closely during the day, and certainly, what he saw gave him grounds for believing the warning of the Bursar to be needful.

"Now the Bursar, if the truth may be told, would have much liked to stand in the shoes of young Heloard, for he had himself more than a liking for the pretty niece of the Abbot, although none but himself and the fair one knew it.

"Night came, and the watch was secretly set; and so wrath was the Abbot that he had given orders to both the porter at the great gate, and the guard at the

postern gate to arm themselves, and should Heloard attempt force, to strike him dead.

"Eleven was supposed to be the hour at which the abduction was to take place, and long before that time the Abbot, armed with his good cross-bow, took up a position at one of the casements in the north transept of the church, which commanded the postern gate.

"It was a dark night, but the Abbot could just make out the gate, and being a good shot, having been fond of the chase from his youth up, he had no doubt but that he could bring down his man at four score yards.

"Time passed slowly, but presently, starting from a kind of reverie into which he had fallen, he saw two shadowy figures at the gate.

"Just then the moon coming from behind a cloud gave sufficient light for him to discern one of the figures to be a man of large stature, but so muffled up as to be unrecognisable. Still, the Abbot, in his rage, was sure he could trace the stalwart form of Heloard beneath his disguise, and without another moment's hesitation raised his good crowsfoot cross-bow and fired.

"The figure fell, and the Abbot trembled, for he suddenly realised that he had human blood on his soul.

"He knelt and prayed, then rushed to the postern gate to find a number of monks gathered round the prostrate figure. Calming himself with a great effort he asked :

"'What means this great disturbance at an hour when all should be sleeping? What is it, I say?'



“‘The Bursar has been shot, my lord Abbot,’ explained the brother supporting the recumbent form. ‘A quarrel from a cross-bow has transfixed him.’

“Then followed a great commotion as the poor fellow was carried into the little hospital. No one could tell how it had occurred, not even the watchman. The Bursar, he explained, had just run out to see that he was doing his duty and impress upon him the necessity of watching the walls as well as the actual gate, when he suddenly fell dead at his feet. He gave the alarm, and monks brought lanthorns, but from whence the bolt came he knew not.

“In a few minutes the Abbot flew to his niece’s room, but only to find it empty; then to Heloard’s cell, which was also untenanted.

“The poor Abbot was beside himself with rage as he sped as fast as his fat legs would allow him to the great gate—only to find it unbarred, and the porter lying beside it, stunned by a blow from the heavy key which had been removed from his girdle.

“‘My palfrey! my palfrey!’ roared the Abbot, ‘bring it hither quickly to the Refectory door; the villain has escaped.’

“Nobody knew what all the excitement was about; some thought the Abbot had discovered the assassin of the worthy Bursar, and others that he had gone stark staring mad. Still, they did his bidding, and in a few minutes his palfrey was saddled and bridled and brought to the door.

"Up leapt the Abbot, cross-bow in hand, and the great oaken gate being opened, away he clattered over the booming drawbridge, out into the murky night.

"He had a good idea that the fugitives would make for the ferry, two miles down the Ant River, and if they once succeeded in gaining the boat they would cross in it, and so cut him off from following them.

"He jolted swiftly and bumpingly along the rugged river bank, and when within half a mile of the ferry he caught sight of the flying figures, evidently bent on crossing with all speed.

"He refrained from shouting, hoping to get much nearer before they were aware that he was following them. Now the moon was obscured, and the path full of holes, which rendered the footing of the palfrey very uncertain, and slower progress had to be made for fear the Abbot might be thrown, or the horse break a leg.

"Only a hundred yards at last intervened, when Heloard, looking round, saw the shadowy form of the Abbot riding through the mist of the river bank.

"‘My sweet one,’ said the lover to the half-fainting Abelöise, ‘he will overtake us before we can reach the ferry. Listen to his palfrey’s hoof-strokes! There is but one way to escape. Get thee upon my back, and I will swim across with thee, dearest.’

"Abelöise with sinking heart did as she was desired, throwing her trembling arms around her brave lover’s neck.

"Heloard carefully entered the deep mud at the

river's reedy bank and struck out. He was young and lusty, and could just keep his mouth and nostrils above the water as he breasted the current, bearing, what was to him, the whole world upon his broad back.

"The river was not wide, and he had swum half across when the Abbot arrived on the spot where lay the mantle and hood of his wayward niece.

"'Turn thee!' shouted the excited uncle, 'turn thee! and I may yet forgive thee, thou rascal priest.'

"But Heloard heeded him not, only striking out the more vigorously.

"'Once more,' shouted the Abbot, 'I command thee turn, or by our layde I will have at thee! Stop, I say!'

"No response was made, and Heloard had by this time just reached the opposite bank, when the Abbot seeing his quarry was about to evade him, raised his bow, not at a venture, nor as one shoots in the dark, for the moon was now throwing her lustrous light on all beneath her, but as one bent to succeed, he aimed his bow with murderous intent, the powerful twisted thong sending its bolt so true, that the couple rolled back from the treacherous bank which they had gained into the black water, transfixed with the same arrow, and dead as Antony and Cleopatra.

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"Behind you," said Wiley, pointing to an upstanding tree stump growing on a mound, "is the resting-place

of Abelöise and Heloard, for they were interred in the same grave, and upon it was planted a plum-tree which—or one of its descendants—was alive till a few years since, when it was struck by lightning and killed. The remarkable thing about that tree was, that every plum had a curious double stone, which the villagers around used to call ‘the joined hearts of Abelöise and Heloard.’

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“I think, ladies, it is now time for us to return to the wherries as the evening is becoming somewhat chilly.”

Everyone thanked Mr. Green for the very interesting legends he had favoured them with, and some remarked they wondered he did not collect them and have them printed in book form.

Wiley blushed, and stammered something about his being too modest to put his name to a book of stories, which, after all, might not be true.

Whereupon the little fat man of the party who had apparently been very interested with the recitals, winked knowingly at Wiley, and drew him aside, standing on tip-toe to whisper in his ear.

“Mr. Green, if you can’t sling the hatchet with any man I ever met in all my numerous travels, I’ll eat my boots. Still, I’ll give you credit, you did it *very* well, and rubbed it in very smoothly. When you spoke of King John and the Wash, I thought you were very nearly coming to grief, but you were quite equal to the occasion. They were certainly tough yarns, and I

could certainly not swallow them as the others did, but let us come and wash them down with a little Scotch—eh?

“Ha! ha! those double plum-stones! Well, you are a proper liar, and no mistake. But ‘mums’ the word, my boy, rely on me, I’ll not give such a good fellow away.”

And he kept his word.

Wiley slept as peacefully that night as if he were a stranger to tarradiddles, but as he said, what *are* half the mediæval romances?—lies! So he slept peacefully, conscious of having enriched Broadland literature by at least twenty pages; not even dreaming that legends without foundation or the approving halo of years are of little worth. He told his yarns quite four centuries too late, but that was not his fault; it was his misfortune that he was not born sooner.

Poor man, he and others were awakened in the morning by a crash overhead, and rushed on deck to find that the boy Ben had blundered overboard with a dozen more plates in his hand.

Wiley scruffed him out by the nape of the neck, and administered a good hearty kick on the dripping lad’s rear for his carelessness.

“Bad start for the day,” mumbled Wiley, as the sleepy head of Rogers peeped above the coaming of the companion, “and there’ll be more trouble to follow, I’ll warrant.”

And so there was, for soon after breakfast a trading

wherry bumped accidentally against the "Jest," and upset a form containing four pilgrims, two ladies and two gentlemen, who had placed their seat as far against the low gunnel as it would go.

A scream and a splash, and there they were floundering in seven feet of water.

Over went a life-buoy—yards from the struggling people—and away it floated silently and uselessly down stream. Out went a couple of quants, to which the half-fainting damsels clung, and in went two of "the boys" to the rescue.

Then men tumbled into the boats, and barking their shins in their hurry, fumbled to untie the wondrous knots made by the unnautical pilgrims when they made the boat fast.

Everyone yelled and shouted, and two dogs aboard barked in sympathy, and——well, in two minutes the six sodden pilgrims were on deck again, three nearly fainting (including a male), one cursing and swearing, and two laughing as if they would like it all over again. They were "the boys" of course.

Wiley hanging on the inboard part of the quant looked pale but cool, while poor Rogers quivered like an aspen leaf in a breeze, his very teeth shaking like castenets; but once the danger was over he had towels and blankets and hot spirits ready in less than a brace of shakes, and earned the heartfelt thanks of all the unfortunates. Rogers was himself again!

Poor Wiley shook his head: as a skipper he should

have looked on the thing as a simple little accident—more as a joke than anything else—but he was a little given to superstition, as all good Norfolk men are; he therefore shook his head dubiously, mumbling,

“The day is not through with its ill-luck yet.”

Wiley was right, for about eleven p.m., Dropkins of the “Herald” approached him with a long face:

“I say, Muster Green, I’ve a-bin a-looking at them there pies we took aboard at Acle, and they right hum agin, that they du. What shull we du about ’em?”

Wiley looked aghast.

Here was a blow at the commissariat that would have staggered Napoleon himself, and—it was Bank Holiday too—Whit-Monday.

Muster Green inspected the nine great pies, and came to the conclusion that they were uneatable—heat and confined space had turned them to *game* pies, and *high* at that.

“Faugh! jest smell yew this one, maaster!” said Dropkins, holding one at arm’s-length.

They were quietly but quickly consigned to a watery grave.

Here was a dilemma! What *was* to be done?

Dropkins was despatched to Ludham, three miles away, to ascertain if meat of any kind—pork, beef, mutton, or veal could be had for love or money. It was very doubtful, for in these out of the way places they appear only to kill half a bullock at a time.

He returned in two hours with two and a half pounds

of sturdy-looking steak, the whole contents of the one little butcher's shop, and that said he was meant for the dinners of the butcher and his family, who will now have eggs instead.

Where was Rogers?

No one had seen him since the dreadful discovery two hours before, but on Wiley going to the cabin to prepare the coming lunch, he saw a paper on the table, on which was written :

"I'm off to Wroxham to try for a supply of meat, keep the pilgrims steady till I return. R."

"Well, he's plucky, anyway," mused the skipper, "for it's a good six miles each way. Poor little chappie, I hope he'll succeed, or the whole trip will be spoiled."

It was a doleful day for him, and try as he would he could not be cheerful. He caught himself whistling the "Old Hundredth" and "The Dead March from Saul," for he felt sure Rogers' mission must fail; who ever heard of a country butcher having meat in his apology for a shop on a Whit-Monday?

Wiley grew tired of watching; but about two o'clock, the boy Ben came up to him and asked if he would bring a big basket up the road as Mr. Rogers was back again.

Wiley jumped for joy, and ran like a big boy with the basket over his head to where Rogers stood by the side of a baker's cart, his face lighted with triumph.

Hurrah! the character of the caterers was saved, there would be no breakdown in the commissariat this

trip ; for Rogers had procured four legs of mutton and two good joints of beef, besides fourteen pounds of prime sausages.

"Bravo, Rogers! you deserve a statue as a public benefactor," cried his partner.

The pilgrims never knew the desperate straits of the caterers.

A nice sail to Horning Ferry gave an excuse for handed-round refreshment instead of a "sit-down" lunch—the crew being busy sailing. Horning Ferry was reached at 3 p.m., and at 5.30 a capitally cooked dinner put the pilgrims in an amiable trim.

Just as at Stokesby, so at Horning, *little* bits of fun had quite a big ending.

Someone ferreted out a hollow india-rubber ball, and a copper-stick being lent by the hostess, the host of the Ferry Inn gave the crew of the fleet permission to use his paddock for a game of rounders or anything else they desired to play.

At the sports they went, and of course "the boys" must soon join in, then as it was a beautiful evening the rest of the pilgrims must look on.

Presently some of the ladies were invited to join in, then their friends, till at last the fun and laughter became so catching that even the old grey-beards joined in, men who had not run twenty yards during the past twenty years.

It was wonderful to see what a large amount of fun could be obtained from a bit of india-rubber and a stick.

One old fellow, with a waist of aldermanic proportions, ran like a deer, galloping with his knees up like a thoroughbred trotter, and made everyone laugh to such an extent that they could not hit him with the ball, so that several times he romped round the bases and saved his side, a feat the younger ones could seldom accomplish.

And so the merry half-hundred played and enjoyed all kinds of childish games, till, all to soon, the crepuscular light waned, and darkness dropped its mantle over river and lea.

But it was only nine o'clock, and all being in a merry mood adjournment was made to the largest room in the inn—one which was furnished with a piano, but unfortunately, no music.

Plenty of talent was available, but frequently when a person was willing to give a song the accompanist could not play it from memory, and *vice versa*; but hearing of this the landlord put matters right by producing a pile of little song books, published by Beecham, of Pill fame, and the situation was saved.

The room was completely packed, and those who could not obtain admittance lowered the top sash of the window and joined in the choruses outside, where the refrains were also taken up by the villagers and others assembled.

Among those who gained access to the room was old Captain —, a well-known character, who, half seas over, obliged with the ancient ditty "Lord Lovell."

He pitched it in such a low key that, here and there, when a low note came in he could not reach it, so bobbed his chin on his breast instead, rolling his eyes in a most ludicrous manner, looking like "a dying duck in a thunderstorm," as the saying goes.

Soon everyone else's head was bobbing at the low notes, and so much amusement caused by the novelty, that it was *the* song of the evening. On the old fellow being asked, later in the evening, to repeat his performance, he made an attempt, but was too far gone. He made a ludicrous effort, but his pipes failed him, and he only gurgled a few notes before utterly collapsing.

At ten o'clock, the burly village policeman edged his way in, and by some stretch of the law, proceedings were kept going furiously till midnight, when the still warbling pilgrims stumbled aboard their respective vessels, and rolled into their much required berths.

In the morning the weather had entirely changed, a steady rain was descending, the river being covered with a thin mist; and so it continued throughout the day, which was very unfortunate, as from Horning Ferry to Wroxham is undoubtedly the most picturesque four miles on the River Bure.

There is not much fun in standing about deck in mackintoshes, viewing scenery half-hidden by mist, as many of the "old masters" are by time, grime, and varnish; but what was to be seen the pilgrims saw, and what was not to be seen had to be imagined

from Wiley's graphic if *slightly* exaggerated descriptions.

Oh! that Wiley! Rogers had to pinch him several times when he was spreading what he called the "glamour" on too thick.

"Spread it like honey," whispered Rogers. "Put it on a nice even layer, and it goes down with relish, but if you go and pile it on as you are doing you'll end in making them sick."

So Wiley spread it thinner and they liked it.

The last night was spent at Wroxham, and it proved a regular soaker, so that no one could go ashore to the village, but the pilgrims issued their invitations from yacht to yacht, and organized card parties, and little sing-song parties, and visited each other, really passing a very enjoyable evening despite the deluge—because their surroundings were so novel and strange to them.

Going from wherry to wherry in boats, in the pouring rain and darkness, seemed to please everyone, because they were sure of a hearty greeting in the bright, cosy cabins of their friends.

All was joy that evening except on the "Trillion," where "the boys" had a disagreement among themselves and a violent shindy took place. Wiley parted the combatants, getting roughly handled as he did so, and restored peace for a time; but soon after he had regained his cabin war again broke out, and once more the red blood flowed, and language was cerulean.

Poor Rogers was terrified, and tried to restrain his

partner from again interfering, but Wiley's "monkey was on top of the pole," as he expressed it, and back he went to the belligerents.

Then there was another shindy, worse than the first, and Wiley, backed by three of "the boys," went in a buster for the other six in the confined space of the cabin, and pandemonium reigned for some minutes ; but Wiley's warriors prevailed and peace was at last restored.

The belligerents were put in separate cabins—by exchange—and Wiley, the bold, rejoined his trembling partner, with a lip like a ripe tomato, a lump on his cheek, and sundry areas of skin off his knuckles. He scarcely looked like the victor he was, and he said some very nasty things about personally conducted trips as he sponged his face, but, good fellow, in half an hour he had forgotten all about it—he snored!

All night the deluge continued, and the last breakfast was consumed with the rain blowing in gusts against the cabin windows, but still the pilgrims seemed happy through it all.

At eleven three brakes arrived to take the pilgrims to their railway station (Stalham), and still it rained.

A meeting in mackintoshes and rugs was held, and the spokesman of the pilgrims thanked the partners, in no measured terms, for their incessant toil in making their visit to Broadland an interesting and memorable one. He thanked them heartily on behalf of the whole party, whereupon three cheers were raised for the partners, and an extra one for the crews.

Then clambering into their vehicles the pilgrims drove away in the drizzle, cheering and waving their handkerchiefs, till a turn in the road hid them from view.

The partners returned to the cabin of their yacht, and as Wiley kissed his partner—for "Rogers," we may disclose, was his devoted wife, he said,

"My opinion upon personally conducted and mixed parties is changed, in future someone else may try *their* luck. I've had some!"

CHAPTER XI.

DRIPPINGS FROM A HASTY PEN.

IT has been said, and with some amount of truth, that

“Satan finds some mischief still
For idle hands to do.”

It is to be hoped, however, that in the following little verses the reader will find no *mischief*, but that they were the outcome of *idle* moments, the writer readily admits.

Near an orchestra in a temporary theatre, somewhere out West, a card was hung, on which was scrawled :

“*Notice.* Please don’t shoot; the musicians are doing their best.”

Kindly therefore, reader, do not criticise too severely, for I hang out *my* card :

“*Notice.* I am not the laureate, I am only trying my best to amuse.”

Possibly the following, if set to music, might help as one of a set of Broadland Songs to while away a wet day.

THE DELIGHTS OF THE BROADS.

In the spring of the year,
On the Broad and the Mere,
Mid the reed rands and osiers, loud singing,
Mark the tiny brown wren,
And the sable moorhen,
Tit-bits to their little ones bringing.

There the kingfisher gay,
And the heron in grey,
In the sunlight themselves are disporting;
While the ruff and the reeve,
From bright morn till eve,
Together are now seen consorting.

Chorus.

Here's a cheer for the Broads,
That such pleasure affords;
Hurrah! for their bright waters gleaming,
Where gay youth and old age,
Dilettante or sage,
May indulge in delight and day dreaming.

In the sweet summer-time,
When the year's in its prime,
And the flowers are the banks gaily lining,
Doth the yachtsman delight,
On the trim "Hyter Sprite,"
To "make way" ere the day is declining.

Then the eve has a charm,
Rosy waters are calm,
And the swallow swift-winged is seen hieing
While the beetle's loud drone
Tells another day's flown,
As the gold from the sky's slowly dying.

Chorus. Here's a cheer, etc.

In the autumn sublime,
 'Mid the perfume of thyme,
 Doth the angler enjoy these sweet waters,
 When with line and with hook,
 In some reed-hidden nook,
 He may fish in the quietest of quarters.

Then the ravenous pike,
 From his haunt in the dyke,
 1 Goes forth to deep pools—clear ones shunning ;
 While on nights dark and drear,
 At the fall of the year,
 The eels in their legions are “running.”

Chorus. Here's a cheer, etc.

Come the skaters so gay,
 When King Frost holdeth sway,
 And the sledge-bells so clearly are ringing ;
 Hand in hand lovers glide,
 While the boys on their slide
 With boisterous mirth are o'er brimming.

Through the gleaming white snow,
 Soft the fowler doth go,
 And he brings down the bird past him winging ;
 While on bright, open days,
 His quaint Norfolk lays,
 The reed-cutter now is heard singing.

Chorus. Here's a cheer, etc.

Among the thousands who visit the Broads annually,
 there must be many with poetic temperaments, men and
 women alike, who are as full of poetry as a sausage
 skin is with bread—pardon me, meat.

Why do they not burst into song and send it—good,

bad, or mediocre—to some common centre, where it may be collected and edited, and made up in book form for the delectation of other visitors?

“Broadland Lays.” That would sound well. Birds are songsters, too, and many of them in our district lay well; why should not our Broadland visitors (the human kind) have their “lays” also?

One day an invitation came to the yacht for Linear and his “Innocents” to pay a visit to a certain Hall, which was gladly accepted.

All went well until the lady of the house introduced her eight-months-old little daughter and requested that one of her guests would kindly write a verse about it in her book, which she called “Omnium Gatherum.” Then a painful silence fell over all, deep and unbroken. One by one the guests glided out into the extensive gardens to look at the flowers, of which they suddenly became mightily enamoured, until only one remained, and *he* willy-nilly was under an obligation to his hostess to do the deed.

There was the “kid,” smiling and pewking in the nurse’s arms, but it was only of the common or garden kind—two round blue eyes, a slobbery mouth, a wee little nose, and a handful of fuzzy golden hair.

What *could* he write about such universal features? If the “kid” had two noses, or a mouthful of pearly teeth, there would have been something for a poet to start upon.

Teeth—ah yes, good idea.

Doubtful of sex the poet asks :

“Eh, nurse, has *it* any teeth yet?”

“Oh yes, sir, *she* has one through, and I think some more are not far off.”

That was enough, the spring poet out with pencil and pocket-book and set to work, and after a desperate struggle, seized “Omnium Gatherum,” and wrote the following *impromptu* :

THE SOLITARY TOOTH.—Act I.

Dimples and smiles and skin of pink and white,

A face as orange, round and full ;

Hair all aglow with golden light,

And coral ears that tapering fingers pull.

Her rosebud mouth must not be missed forsooth,

For it contains a solitary, pearly tooth !

She rises like a ray from bright Aurora—

A world of joy and hope untried, lies spread before her.

Then he gave a sigh, and turning over the page, mused, and sucked his pencil, and in doing so broke the point. Then he mused again as he re-sharpened his weapon to a piercing point, and wrote on the next page.

THE SOLITARY TOOTH.—Act II.

Wrinkles and furrows, and a skin of parchment hue ;

A face of contoured hill and dale ;

Hair scant and grey, and much dishevelled too ;

Her features nipped, and wan and blue,

Her skinny lips agape 'neath hookèd nose,
 A fractured, solitary fang disclose.
 Spent is a long life's undulating wave;
 May happy future dawn—beyond the grave.

Then he closed the book and fled.

* * * * *

Once upon a time there was a preacher who lived in a certain Broadland village and drank sherbet till his nose grew as red as a cock's comb, or if it was not the drink of the Persians it might have been the drink of the Dutch, for in his back yard was quite a pile of squarefaced bottles, which gossips said he was saving to build himself a warm summer-house with when he had collected sufficient.

Other malevolent persons said banishment to an ice-house would be better, as it would give him a chance to cool his proboscis, though it would not cause his hands to cease shaking.

Many ways of curing him were tried but in vain, and his friends nearly gave him up as incurable when a bright idea struck a visitor who conversed with the unworthy preacher. He knew the latter to be a very estimable and thinking man in everything else but his habit of drinking too freely between meals—and occasionally *at* meals—and even in bed, but he could not hear that anyone had tried poetry upon him, so concluded he would try.

Accordingly he sprawled on the deck of his yacht, and in the bright sunshine wrote the few following lines, which the sherbert drinker's wife promised to pin to his pillow, as it is usual to take one's physic before retiring to roost.

Now the poet wants to take out a patent for his lines as a safe cure for "D.T." Here are the lines that cured Stiggins.

GOING TO THE D—.

Familiar grown with Bacchus,
We woo his warm embrace;
His dulcet breath doth comfort give,
But never brings us grace.
His baneful arms around us glide,
And draw us closer, till
The mask of Bacchus falls away,
And much against our will
We find we're hugging Death, whose grasp
Is round us thrown with vice-like clasp.
Remorse, regrets, nor friends can save,
He drags us to a drunkard's grave.

Marvellous results followed. A dose of the above each night for a week, and now the preacher wears the blue button of temperance.

Of course Broadland, like every other place, has its dull times, its wet times, and its off days; on such occasions, after cards and cabin games have run their course, and are voted slow, other means have to be devised for keeping the party alive; something

desperate and daring, and these deeds of daring do at times take the form of poetry. Such a course avoids bloodshed, but it is frequently just as killing.

Many a fair page of otherwise stainless paper lost its character during desperate moments of muse murdering by the Innocents, and reams of paper, quarts of ink, and tons of brains have been wasted by them in efforts to produce something presentable to the outer world, that is the whole of mankind outside the doors of their snug cabin.

Some of these sweet, poetic effusions have been preserved to burden the careworn public, and are here embalmed in printer's ink—a fitting burial.

The first was written under peculiar circumstances. Stuggy, who was fond of slipping off on private and mysterious excursions by himself, would not one day join his brother Innocents in a boat-party, but under the plea of remaining on the yacht, as he was a "bit off colour," was left behind to lie and watch the little fishes playing under the stern. He called these schools of little fish his kindergarten, as they were composed of small fry; and he would lie by the hour together on the counter with his face over the stern watching the movements of his scaly friends.

When the trio returned in the evening Stuggy was in bed with a pair of awful black eyes and a nose swollen to the size and rubicund aspect of a decent sized Victoria plum.

"He had had a fall," so he said, but that was all

that could be squeezed from him, and the truth did not come to light for several days after, when an accidental call at a neighbouring inn brought to light the fact that a certain gentleman had called there to play skittles, had got merry, then unwise, then quarrelsome, and had finally been carried to a yacht after being knocked down by the "cheese" used in bowling over the ninepins!

Next morning the following effusion was found tacked to the cabin ceiling above his berth.

ODE TO A BLACK EYE.

Hail to thee, thou beauteous optic !
Thou wondrous window of the human frame ; all hail !!
Thou bonny blinker of cerulean hue,
I gaze upon thine image in my mirror
With a disposition of extreme dismay.
With bated breath, and sighs of tribulation,
I watch thy hues cameleon, hour by hour,
For neither lordly salmon nor the toothsome trout
In dying shows such prismic gems as thou ;
Nor can the rainbow in sweet summer's shine,
Vie with the colours thou thyself possess.
First comes the crimson glow like Bacchus' nose ;
Then like the fallen mantle of the darkest night,
Thy gorgèd lid untimely droops him down,
Unwilling all to gaze on swift prismatic changes
That in one course of Phœbus bright are wrought.
Funereal black surrounds thy diamond beam of sight,
While follow colours which but choicest gems possess ;
Peeps through the Nigrine cloud carbuncle gay :
While shades of garnet and of violet amethyst
Are flecked with transient shades of sapphire blue :

Anon appears the green of Erin's Isle—the emerald.
 Deeply green as Adriatic Sea in summer's prime,
 Sweet shades of beryl's duller green appear,
 With chrysoprase of softest verdant sheen :
 And with these tints the zenith of the iridescent optic's gained.
 Then with a change quite gradual, yet marked,
 The sickly tones of chrysolite and chrysoberyl glow,
 Leaving the dying embers of a topaz rare and pale
 To usher out thy fading lemon tones.
 The owner of the convalescent optic cries amain,
 Like England's king, "Now Richard is himself again."

The recipient got over his ode, and never again deserted his comrades to play skittles with the natives.

During a long winter's cruise, when broads and waterways alike were blocked with ice, and the cold Irish stew froze into "collared-head," the butter into amber stone, and the beer in the keg refused to run from the tap, while the snow was piled on deck a foot thick, the Innocents took to song writing to pass away the long evenings.

These songs Weedy set to music: that is, he brought out his concertina, and after many preliminary trials, with his eyes scanning the lines while his fingers ran over the keys—he would invent a tune that would make the song singable—or rather he did, as a rule, but sometimes a misfit would occur, which had to be altered.

It might so happen that at the end of the line of music there would be a word to spare, or a bit of the tune would overhang the last word, but that was a mere detail and soon put right, for Weedy as a musician

was a marvel—what he could not invent he could crib, so he was bound either to make the music fit the words or the words the tune: it didn't matter to the Innocents a straw so long as there was a good chorus and plenty of noise.

Here is the only song the writer can remember the whole of, and probably it will be all sufficient to the gentle reader who has never done him wrong of any kind.

To sing the refrain, sit bolt upright with chest well expanded; then with head thrown well back and mouth well caverned, "give it lungs." Hang on to the Waugh wa-a-a-ugh! lustily, and roar it out in as many keys as there are members present. By following these rules—after a few glasses of whisky—a beautiful chorus will result, as the roars may be produced of calibres varying from that of Shakespeare's "suckling dove" to the full diapason of a modern steam syren.

No notice need be taken of the verses themselves, the beauty of the song lies in the one word "Wa-a-a-a-ugh!"

There are one word plays, why not one word songs?

THE ARCTIC KING.

I.

Oh, the King of the North is the Polar bear,
And his throne is a berg of ice;
And his loud, wild roar, or a shake of his paw,
Make his subjects obey in a trice.

When he gives a big wa-a-ugh !
From his cavernous jaw,
And proclaims he is king,
With a long, deep roar.
With a wa-a-a-a-ugh !!
What a roar ?
Mind the claw on his big, strong paw !

II.

The wily white fox is a subject of his,
And a crafty old fellow is he ;
When the monarch dines from the ribs of a deer,
To steal a quiet snack tries he.
But he gives, etc., etc.

III.

Now the seal has an eye like a young gazelle—
A voice that is plaintive and shy ;
But to keep from the bear, ever ready to tear,
Has to be both watchful and sly.
When he gives, etc., etc.

IV.

The whale of the ocean is chief, we must own,
But the bear is the monarch on land ;
He's the *masher* of all, in his cosy white robe,
As he saunters along the cold " Strand."
And he gives, etc.

V.

From the Land of the Rose those two legg'd brutes
With guns for his blood may thirst ;
But, like Glass's hare, they may cook him fair,
But—they've got to " catch him first."
Then he'll give, etc.

VI.

Now, comrades, a health to this King of the North,
May we meet with this rover free;
And with bullet and knife take home from the strife
Bruin's robe from the Arctic Sea.
But he'll give, etc.

And thus with music, song, smoke, and grog, many
a long winter evening was passed till ten p.m., when
was piped the signal, "all hands to hammocks."

CHAPTER XII.

THE INNOCENTS' WINTER CRUISE.

JANUARY scarcely seems the *best* month for a cruise on the Broads, but after trying the whole of the months, right round the calendar, the writer has difficulty in saying which is absolutely the worst of the whole twelve, but probably it is the one called March, because of the east winds which do then blow and march the weaklings and adventurous to their family doctors if nowhere worse.

Every month has its enjoyments and its drawbacks, and what suits one does not suit another—the angler, the skater, the artist, the yachtsman, and the gunner, each want different weather, and grumble when they don't get it, and also—when they do.

Human nature is hard to please, and if the classical gentleman who turns on the weather for us aloft would give a fresh turn to his machinery every day, still some would not be pleased.

With woman it is different, she only comes out in the summer, and is consequently pleased with everything. She just leaves all her best belongings at home and is happy, because she has nothing to think of.

But man, "unregenerate man," as Byron calls him, growls at everybody and everything, and like the bear he is, should only be seen on the Broads in winter, when he can have everything his own way, and shiver, and skate, and shoot to his heart's delight.

His rude swear words at want of luck and want of this and that hurt nobody, in times of frost they simply freeze and fall harmless at his feet.

This chapter will show what a party of four innocent little bears did during January and part of February, 188—, so that other brother bruins may consider if they would like to go and do likewise. Probably not one in a thousand of the visitors to the Broads have had the experience of a winter cruise, and therefore this chapter should be of especial interest to many.

The Innocents left Liverpool Street Station one bright January morning for Carlton Colville, which, as everyone knows, is adjacent to Oulton Broad. And a rough lot they looked as they stood on the platform of the London Terminus in their nautical winter rig.

One of them caught sight of the penny-in-the-slot weighing machine, so all had to be weighed. 14 st. 8 lbs., 13 st. 1 lb., and 15 st. 3 lbs. were the weights of the first three—weights which caused Burley to snigger, for when he stood on the little swaying platform the hand flew bolt upright at the twenty stones, and there wobbled as if paralyzed at being called upon to perform a task beyond its limit. It was no go.

"What a nice little pullet!" remarked a bystander.

Then another caught sight of the sack three parts full of rough warm clothing, boots, etc., and asked his companion in a low voice, "What've they got there, Bob?"

Bob's reply, uttered in a supercilious tone was:

"W'y, they're goin' fishin', karn't ye sec; that there's their bloomin' *grarnd bait!* and, lor lumme, they've got enough of it."

Arrived at Carlton they were met by Lee and Josling, who were to form their crew, and the luggage was soon transferred to the yacht, kindly lent by that good old water-dog, John Dawbarn, now at rest, full of years and beloved by all who knew him.

It was but little after noon, yet the days in January are so short that everyone had to work hard to get stores aboard. There was a list as long as Linear's leg to be purchased, and very soon all kinds of things began to tumble aboard: potatoes, onions, groceries, oil, coals, candles, bread, eggs, butter, whisky, beer, milk, and a hundred other things.

A quiet hand of cards in the cosy parlour of the Wherry Inn, and a short stroll in the moonlight, brought bedtime, and by 6.30 next morning all were awake and groping about in the dark. Breakfast at the inn at 7.30 and aboard the "Waterfay" by nine, by which time the cold mist began to lift, and the welcome sun to throw its rays over the glittering lagoon.

The "Waterfay" was a fifteen-tonner, fifty feet long, ten and a half feet beam, and of four and a half feet

draught—a foot too deep for these waters. She possessed two cabins, a very necessary provision when you have one among your number whose snores make the vessel quiver from stem to stern, and spread consternation among his friends. But they were lucky from the very start—Stuggy, who was deaf in one ear, volunteered, actually *volunteered* to sleep in Leviathan's cabin, as by bunging up his sound ear with a section of a felt gun-wad he could sleep as soundly as a seaman on his watch.

Well, there were two cabins parted by a bulkhead with folding doors, so that during the daytime the doors could be fastened back, and a single cabin, fourteen feet by ten feet, was the result, and very comfortable it was.

Warmth was assured by a coal stove, with a pipe leading through the side of the skylight, but ugh! what a fogo it made when first lighted. They were smoke-dried like Indians in a wigwam, and as Weedy remarked one had then to stop up nose and mouth, and breathe through his ears, which then acted as gills.

From the fore-end of the cabin a door led to the forepeak, from which it was separated by the lavatory, etc., so that in inclement weather one need not go outside for anything.

The forepeak was unusually large, affording ample sleeping accommodation for the two men at night and for culinary purposes during the day.

At 10.30 all was ready for a start, but Stuggy, who

was keen on photography, was missing. Linear was sent ashore to hunt him up, and found him at last with a lady—no, not a *young* one, for she had seen more years than the combined ages of the two friends.

He had fixed the old lady in position against a water-butt, with a white cat in her arms and a dwile on her head, and was just telling her to look happy when Linear pounced upon him with :

“Come, Stuggy, old man, you are keeping us all waiting and delaying the start, you will have ample opportunity for the camera by-and-by. Hurry up, there’s a good chap!”

“Just look at the dear old girl’s face,” was Stuggy’s reply ; “just twig the wrinkles in it. Why, Rembrandt’s celebrated old woman is not in it with her ; she could give the painting fifty wrinkles and a beating. Just look at her, my boy ; her face is like a valuable old china vase cracked and chipped in a thousand places. She’s a perfect human gem, and I *must* have her.

“Now steady, please. There ; not *too* much smile. Only two seconds. Steady. One! two!” The deed was done, and Stuggy had secured his rare old piece of Lowestoft ware.

At eleven, being bright and frosty, the “Waterfay” scudded away before a fine S.E. breeze at a great rate.

Fisher’s Row and the Horseshoe passed, Oulton Dyke was entered as the four Innocents chatted about that wonderful man, George Borrow, and his house,

which then stood on an acclivity overlooking the broad.

The "Bible in Spain" and "Romany Rye" would have been enough to secure fame to any man, but Borrow as a linguist and voluminous writer might have clothed half a dozen other men, beside himself, with fame, and as B—— put it, have had enough left to provide every urchin in the village with a pair of breeches out of what remained. Being used to a solitary life, Borrow, in his old age, shut himself up in his house like a hermit, his tall, sinewy form being known to many, but his voice to few.

He died about 1890, alone. A remarkable man and a remarkable end.

Away went the "Waterfay," scudding along till Beccles is reached, where she is moored by a long building of the factory class, but, by Jupiter! also ye lesser gods! what is the awful stench which assails the noses of all on board? Is fever and pestilence stalking abroad in this cold month? Surely not! Could Beccles be rivalling Cologne?

No, the "Waterfay" has been brought up alongside the tannery, where the dreadful smell of decayed mutton adhering to musty skins is appalling.

The unspoken hint is taken, and a hurried move made to a purer atmosphere.

Beccles talk is of otters and pike. Five fine otters had been taken out since Christmas, and only that morning one of twenty-one pounds has been shot, and is brought

out for inspection—a big brown cat-fox looking animal, which B—— at once gives a half-sovereign for, and sends up to Norwich to be set up for his hall.

B—— is good at story telling, and his friends knowing it, wink furtively at each other as they think of the “whoppers” that will be told of that stuffed skin, and how it came to be a skin and not a body. Its modes of death will be various and promiscuous, sudden and lingering, according to circumstances.

Pike were being caught in the Waveney, at Beccles, in some numbers, so after a hasty two o'clock lunch, Weedy and Stuggy jumped into the dinghy to try their luck with a spoon-bait, while B—— tried live-bait from the bank.

Linear had the “collywobbles,” as he termed a bilious attack, so remained in the warm cabin. The triumvirate caught pike certainly, but the united catch for two hours did not exceed a score pounds.

Still B—— had three nice runs and landed a couple of five-pounders—brothers apparently, and twins at that. Anyway, all returned to the yacht happy and hungry, “two enviable complaints,” as L—— remarked from his dim but cosy corner.

Then came a happy evening of cards, song, smoke, and whisky—the bears were happy in their den; their whole world only measured fourteen feet by ten, yet they were as happy or happier than the Czar of all the Russians with his unmeasurable realm—and they knew it and appreciated it, like the good comrades they were.

Even L—— forgot his “collywobbles,” and warbled “The Skipper and his Boy” in fine style.

. Next day it was freezing hard enough to turn a turnip to stone, but all hands bustled about, “down awning and up sail,” and at noon moored by St. Olave’s Bridge. Lunch; then with rods on shoulder, the Innocents tramped the frosty road to Fritton Decoy, where a couple of hours’ perch fishing was indulged in.

B—— knew the spot where to find them—a deep hole with gravelly bottom, and taking W—— in his boat made direct for it, leaving the others to follow in another boat and find a suitable place for themselves, for Stuggy prided himself upon being *the* angler of the party, and able to find the fish in any given piece of water; but this time he was at fault, as he and his comrade only landed half a dozen fish in two hours, while the others captured thirty, of which they selected a dozen weighing seven and a half pounds for the larder, and turned the others in again.

It was deuced cold fun fishing in an open boat, and as the old tub leaked steadily, in spite of bailing, they went ashore.

In the meantime, Stuggy and Linear had gone for a pull to the other end of the broad as a means of restoring lost circulation, and to thaw their frozen feet for the walk home, for a yacht during a long cruise is *home*, and a cosy one too.

They had only pulled as far as the first decoy, however, when the decoyman appeared, and wanted to

know where the Ath-Rigi-Como-Damietta, or words to that effect, they were going to.

Then they paused in their wild career, beckoning to Mr. Decoyman to come out to them, which he did a quarter of a mile further back so as not to disturb the assembling wild-fowl.

He was a very civil little chap after all when they made his closer acquaintanceship, and as he sat in his curious canoe-like contraption of a catamaran, with his rough fur cap and dannocks, they bartered just as Columbus and his friends did with the natives of another region.

They traded whisky and tobacco for their equivalent in feather—with the meat hanging to them—and returned to the yacht with a brace of teal, ditto of mallard, and a quartette of pigeons, which latter to a certainty were not caught in a pipe decoy, but had by other and mysterious means met a sudden and violent death.

The larder of the "Waterfay" smiled with fatness.

After a hearty dinner—a tea-supper such as only half-starved mariners know how to stow—at seven p.m. came a chat; and being a nice light night, the yacht was quanted by the four Innocents to Burgh Castle, the crew being put into the dinghy and sent ahead to find a suitable mooring place.

The yacht being moored near the cement works, and all made snug, a stroll to the castle ruins to view them by moonlight was indulged in. Moonlight is said by poets to give ruins the true romantic light, and they

ought to know, for do they not mouch around ruins when the moon is at the full whenever they get the chance? Not that poetry and lunacy have any common affinity with the world's "light by night."

Still, moonlight and human aberration after all appear to have something in common, else how was it that Linear by a little tomfoolery caused Stuggo to be madly anxious to buy a field of several acres, merely as a speculation, and all because of a practical joke which he perpetrated out of pure wanton fun.

As the four Innocents gazed upon the venerable ruins—probably the oldest in the kingdom, as they date from the third century, B—— happened to remark that under the surface of the ground around them, could they only tell where, there must be buried many interesting and valuable relics of the past eighteen centuries.

To this, with a wink at the other two, Linear replied, "Rather! why this field which lies between the castle and the river is called 'The Treasure Piece,' and without doubt there are two valuable deposits in it, one of Roman times and another of the Viking days."

"There you are, my boy, just what I expected," exclaimed Stuggo with sparkling eyes; "then why does not someone dig and find out where the treasure is? Why not float a company? But let's hear something more about this treasure. Can you tell us anything that is known of it?"

Now Stuggo is a very prosperous business man, "cute

and spry," as brother Jonathan would put it, and not at all given to romance, yet his friend's taradiddles caused him to indulge in all kinds of daydreams of wealth that might be attained by the expenditure of a few score pounds.

With a preliminary wink to his friends to keep quiet, Linear commenced his yarn of the Treasure Piece, Burgh Castle, which we will call

SUETONIUS SEVERUS.

About the year A.D. 90 when Burgh Castle was brand-new, the Roman garrison there was commanded by one Suetonius Severus, which most schoolboys translate "Chopped Suet," partly because of the fanciful appearance of the name, and partly on account of the known fatness of the Roman officer.

As an officer he was all that could be desired, brave without rashness, and of great forethought, and although a strict disciplinarian, kindly to and beloved by the men under him.

He had, however, one weak spot—his cupidity or love of wealth. Now, Suetonius had only been in charge of Garianonum, as Burgh Castle was then called, some three months, having been sent from the West of England to recuperate his health, after a successful campaign against the Silures, or people of Gloucestershire beyond the Severn.

When he had conquered the Silures he had, according

to Roman custom, imposed a tax upon them—a government war tax—but beyond that he had compelled every man who had fought against him to make him, personally, a present of some jewel or ornament of value. Thus he acquired a chestful, about three bushels, of neck ornaments, ouches, arm ornaments, brooches, torques, etc., as his own share of the spoil of the enemy, and was happy accordingly; but, alas, misfortune came with his ill-gotten gains.

Among those who fought with him in the West were two cavalry-officers named Magnus Pedes and Stratius Baccus, both of whom knew of the treasure.

These officers Suetonius brought with him to Garianonum, which was then a cavalry station standing on a peninsula, and only attackable from the land side.

All went well, until one day Suetonius overheard a plot to steal his treasure, which occurred thus.

He had invited Pedes and Baccus to dine with him, and after the meal begged them, as it was a hot day, to excuse him a little as he wished to take his usual siesta, a custom he had indulged in when in his own country, and which from his excessive corpulence he could not now do without.

In half an hour he awoke, and, peeping through the curtains of his chamber, saw his two subordinates with their heads close together in eager consultation.

Curious to know what could be the subject of such deep consultation, especially as they ever and anon cast furtive glances in the direction of his chamber, he, with

silent steps, gained a little gallery over the two conspirators, whence he could hear their every word, being within a few feet of them.

He was aghast at what he heard ; it was no less than a plot to rob him of the treasure which reposed in the great chest by the wall of the room in which the two conspirators sat.

Should he order their immediate arrest?

No. He would not show that he had been an eaves-dropper, he would set a trap for them.

Next day the two officers were sent to do duty at Venta Icenorum (now Caistor-next-Norwich) for a week.

In the meantime, during a certain night, Suetonius, with his own hands, emptied his treasure chest, throwing the contents down one of the two wells which stood without the walls of the castle, in the field sloping towards the river.

Another and deeper well was situated within the castle, but that did not suit his purpose so well, because he wished to close the well, down which he had thrown his treasure, and it would never have done to close the solitary well within the castle, which was the only source of supply in case of siege.

Having buried his treasure below the pure water he threw in several handfuls of filth, and a large skin of vinegar, and retired to rest.

Next day he desired his amphora to be filled from that particular well, which was accordingly done. Of

course the water was nauseous ; sewage from the stables had probably got into it. The health of the troops must be studied, the well must be closed.

This Suetonius did very effectually by having it filled to the very top with brick rubbish. His treasure was safe ; he alone knew where it was, and could reclaim it at any time with the help of a few of his soldiers.

Now to deal with the centurions, Magnus Pedes and Stratius Baccus.

In due course they returned from their duties at Venta Icenorum, but day after day passed and no attempt was made upon the great treasure chest which still stood in its accustomed place.

What could Suetonius do to expedite matters ?

He scarcely knew, but at length decided to invite the two rascals to dine with him once more.

They came and regaled themselves on his capital viands, drank his best wine, and again the fat captain begged to be excused while he took a short siesta.

The day was hot, and Suetonius instead of pretending, actually did fall into a deep slumber.

How long he slept he did not know, but he awoke with a start to find Pedes and Baccus standing on either side of his couch with drawn swords.

"Speak but a word," hissed Baccus, "and my blade drinks thy very heart's blood."

"We seek thine ill-gotten treasure, O Suetonius Severus, which lies fast bound in yonder chest," said Pedes in a low voice. "We will lead thee to it that

thou mayest unlock it, when that which we can conveniently carry shall be ours, the rest shall remain with thee."

"Ungrateful thieves," commenced Suetonius, but a glittering blade at his throat warned him to desist.

"Thieves indeed," warmly replied Baccus; "did we not help thee to defeat the fierce Silurians, and is not the labourer worthy of his hire? Forward to the chest, and attempt but to give an alarm and——" He waved his sword menacingly before his superior's fat throat.

Suetonius took a curious key from the pedestal of one of his little household gods, where he had kept it secretly, and handed it to Magnus Pedes.

That worthy, dropping on his knee, undid the cumbersome lock and threw open the heavy lid.

Bricks, mortar, and potsherds met his astonished gaze, and nothing more.

The conspirators were dumfounded.

Then after a pause Baccus broke silence.

"Crafty Suetonius, you have so far deceived us, but, an' thou dost not instantly divulge the resting-place of thy treasure, the hair which held the sword of Damocles shall be a very cable to that which holds mine."

"Out with it, old and foolish man!" cried Pedes, "where is thy treasure? Out with it, I say! else will we out with the brief and waning lamp of thy life."

Under such immediate danger Suetonius confessed that the treasure was hidden in the well, cunningly making them believe it was down the well still in use,

near the outer wall of the castle. Seeing a hope to save his life, he appeared to have a friendly feeling to his assailants, assuring them that if one of them would take the trouble to descend the well on the following night, while the other kept guard, they might take as much of his treasure as they could carry away.

"Wilt thou swear not to set spies upon us, nor to take any steps to punish us?" eagerly demanded Baccus.

"By Castor and Pollux, by Hercules, and by the great god Jupiter himself I swear it."

Next night the two centurions kept their tryst at the well. Baccus, with his foot in the bucket, and a hooked fork in his hand, was cautiously lowered by Pedes and had just reached the water, when suddenly from a hollow in the ground, near a little wooden seat, rose Suetonius Severus, sword in hand.

Silent as a cat, in spite of his bulk, and with bare feet, he approached the unsuspecting Pedes, and was about to strike him dead when the breaking of a twig under his foot betrayed his presence.

Magnus Pedes wheeled round in time to catch the blow, which had been intended for his head, upon his left arm, and drawing his own short glaive thrust at Suetonius, who, in turn, taken by surprise, only partly guarded the stroke, receiving a severe wound in the groin.

Up flashed the broad heavy blade wielded by the mighty arm of Suetonius, and in an instant it fell upon the uncovered head of Magnus Pedes, who fell dead at his feet cloven to the eyes.

Suetonius staggeringly picked up the body of the dead man, and with all his might flung it upon the floundering Baccus, who was trying to keep afloat in ten feet of water.

Pedes appeared to fall directly upon his comrade and kill him, for although Suetonius listened awhile, not a sound ascended from the depths below.

* * * * *

Two days after, the Roman captain called to him his head houseman, Indicus Cocculus—a Liberian, and whispered to him :

“Good Indicus, my time on earth draws to a close, let me be buried in the disused well. Have five cubits’ depth of the rubbish removed, and my poor clay there interred ; let my brave soldiers chant around my humble grave, singing a peon to my valour.”

All was done as Suetonius Severus requested : he and his treasure lie buried in the same grave.

* * * * *

“My word,” exclaimed Stuggy excitedly, evidently swallowing the myth as readily as a child does a fairy story, “do you think this treasure has ever been recovered?”

“There is no record of such a find,” replied Linear, nearly exploding, “and I may say positively, that no one has ever made the attempt to find the great treasure of Suetonius. Most of the ornaments were undoubtedly

pure gold, as similar ones on being analyzed have been found to be ninety-nine per cent of pure gold—practically as pure as the virgin metal.”

“Why not, we four, buy the field?” cried Stuggo; “surely a hundred pounds each—or less—would do it. We could then set a gang of navvies to work, and have the whole place rooted up in a couple of months. What do you say, boys? Who’s game to have a try?”

“Wait a bit, old man,” interjected Linear. “What I have told you is only of *one* treasure, but there still remains another which was deposited here at a more recent yet still ancient date; to be precise, the event I am about to speak of occurred in or about the year 840.”

Tryto Hytharda the Viking.

“About the year 637, a Monastery was founded inside the walls of Burgh Castle, which had been deserted by the Romans more than a hundred years before. The Irish were in those days far ahead of their British brethren both in religion and learning, and it need not surprise us when we read that Fursæus, an Irish monk, founded the Monastery with the assistance of Sigebert, King of the East Angles.

“The Monastery prospered greatly, and during the two succeeding centuries, the even then ancient castle received building after building, until the interior formed quite a little university of learning, and all went

well with it till about the year 840, the great year of the Danish Vikings' incursion.

"One day a young monk came running in with the dread news that he had seen four Viking ships coming up the estuary towards their Monastery.

"Great was the commotion caused by the news; war-horns were blown, and everyone from far and near flocked into the castellated Monastery, bringing with them whatever arms and provisions they could hurriedly collect.

"In a short time the Vikings landed right at the foot of 'Treasure Piece,' drawing their dragons ashore also, thereby showing that they intended to stay and if possible sack the place.

"Each long ship contained upwards of 150 men, and the whole expedition, led by two warriors of great stature and strength, named Tryto Hytharda and Ino Abytto, fierce Vikings and experienced in warfare.

"For several days the hardy Norsemen lay around the hoary old castle, and tried, first by intimidation, and then by actual assault, to take the place, but to no purpose. The old Roman walls, ten feet thick and twenty feet high, effectually held them at bay, and each time they advanced to the assault they lost many men, who were shot by the semi-wild fenmen guarding the castle, not but what the monks and others took a very active part in keeping out the foe.

"Every means of gaining an entrance was tried by the fierce Danes, but with no success, and they were

ever afraid of the arrival of reinforcements for the beleaguered, who, by approaching by the sea, might cut them off and slay them to a man.

“Ethelwulph ruled in England—a weak monarch—and to him a message was sent, asking him to send assistance to the monks of Burgh, who were in sore straits. But as the messenger never returned no succour could be expected.

“Week after week dragged by, sickness broke out, and food failed, until at last the gallant little garrison of 500 became so weak that they attempted to make terms with the mighty Hytharda; but he, sure of his prey, would hear of nothing short of an unconditional surrender.

“At length came the day when they could hold out no longer, and the great gate having its barricade removed, was thrown open, and the bloodthirsty Danes admitted.

“As expected everyone was put to the sword, a few of the boldest fenmen, indeed, fought desperately for their lives, so desperately, that they held out till nightfall when they succumbed to sheer numbers and all were slain.

“Of the Danes twenty-four fell on that day, among them their gigantic leader Tryto Hytharda, the hero of a hundred fights both on sea and land.

“Of Hytharda’s curious burial we have a short account in one of the Old Norse Sagás—the ‘Igot Onelung Sagá’—which being translated runs thus:

“‘Tryto Hytharda fell covered with many wounds. An arrow pierced his right eye and he fell dead.

Greatly mourned his men, for he was a mighty Berserk, and they gave him the funeral of a great warrior. Most chiefs are buried above ground, but Hytharda had a strange funeral. Ino Abytto saw a great hole in the ground, in the midst of the camp, which lay between the castle and the river. Ino sent men for the chair of Hytharda, which stood bound to the floor of his ship.

“Then was Hytharda thong-tied upright in his chair with weapons in his hands, and in the midst of the pit was placed. Then each Viking bade farewell to his chief, and cast into the pit such offerings as he deemed fit; many great gifts of golden vessels, armlets and chains were so cast in, so that Hytharda sat him to his knees in gold.’ It was a Viking burial.

“Then came a messenger saying King Ethelwulph’s ships are in sight, two-and-twenty great ships all told.

“Ino Abytto said, ‘Launch me the four ships,’ and they were launched. ‘Now,’ said he also, ‘bring to me the very great plunder of this city of Burgh,’ and they brought it on the backs of ten men. Then said Ino, ‘Cast it in with our dead chief, and cover up the pit, basket by basket, until it be filled.’ Then they filled up the pit and departed every man to his ship.

“But the British ships did surround Ino Abytto’s ships in the form of a crescent moon, and did capture and slay the Vikings, so that no man escaped.

“This is the song of Igot Onelung.”



"So you see," said Linear, "this Viking treasure must have been even greater than that left by the Roman Suetonius. Why, my dear fellow, this field must be a veritable gold mine!"

"By jingo, old man, you make me quite eager to try my luck and ascertain if the treasures still exist," exclaimed Stuggy; "anyway, I will think the matter over, and if you fellows will not join me in the venture, gads, I've almost a mind to try it on my own responsibility. If I am unsuccessful in the search, I could still sell the land for say half what I gave for it. By jingo, I'll try it, for I'm one of the luckiest beggars out."

And he did write to the owner, believing Linear's stories, but that worthy, thinking the joke had gone far enough, intercepted the letter and returned a fictitious one declining to sell the land. This to avoid bloodshed, for Stuggy is a fiery bruiser.

And so the Innocents walked up and down smoking in the frosty air, viewing the venerable ruins of the oldest castle in Great Britain, for its supposed building took place A.D. 34, the year in which our Lord was crucified. Bathed in moonlight they were brought under a kind of glamour, for they chatted (for them) quite solemnly and seriously of the might of the Romans, who built the castle when England was a mere howling wilderness, and its inhabitants little better than savages: of the fire and slaughter and devastation of the fierce Danish pirates, who, landing from their great "serpents and longships," smote the natives hip and

thigh ; of the valour and prowess of the Anglo-Saxon colonists, and the rude subjection by the Norman Conqueror, and then returned to their own Viking ship and did what none of those nations with all their pomp and circumstance ever did—played “nap” for counters in the form of Barcelona nuts, six for a penny !

Then midnight came, and the whole ship’s company retired to roost, but not to sleep, for they lay in bed and chattered and laughed to such an extent that not a wink of sleep came to their eyelids. Whether it was the full moon, or the ozone in the bracing frosty air, or the potency of the “tea” they had taken in the evening that had affected them, none could tell ; the hilarity pervaded even the forepeak.

Everyone had an attack of what the ladies call the “giggles,” and badly too.

About one a.m., just as things were settling down and eyelids becoming heavy, Fred, the skipper, discovered that the wind had changed, and was favourable for a run across Breydon—briny Breydon !

The question was put : “ Shall we sleep or sail ? ”

The reply was : “ Sail by all means.”

So out everyone tumbled again and dressed.

In the meantime Josling got the kettle “under weigh,” and made a jorum of hot cocoa, “so strong,” said he, “that the ole spune ’ll stand right up in it, maaster.”

And so it did, it was both “wittles and drink.”

Then all hands on deck to “furl” awning and prepare

and hoist sail. When ropes are coated with rime frost and the sails rattle like tin plates as the folds are stretched out, it is cold and hard work to set the big main-sail properly, especially when the sheaves are frozen in the blocks; but after a lot of swigging on the halliards the sail was got up fairly well, and away scudded the "Waterfay."

Although the wind was favourable, the tide was still running up, as it still wanted an hour to high water.

The noble expanse of Breydon looked at its best, its distant shores stretching away in the misty green-blue atmosphere till they were completely lost, and the lake looked like an inland sea, its shores presently quite fading from view.

The near posts which mark the channel could be seen stretching away like a battalion of infantry in open order, the further ones being quite invisible under the fairy canopy of moonlight haze which hung over the shimmering lagoon.

Then the wind veered to the north, and several "boards" had to be made—"a long leg and a short one."

Oh the delights of tacking on a frosty night!

Linear, not being quite well yet, was allowed to sit in the cabin and cuddle himself up warm and cosy, and watch the stove to see it did not capsize, while the other three tossed to see who should work the stiff jib-sheets.

Lee sheet, weather sheet, and odd man out!

Burley was the lucky man to win, but although he

had no cold wet ropes to handle he was not idle, for while the others worked he sang them some pretty little songs, regardless of the cold air. His breath streamed out into the night like steam from a kettle.

How the moonbeams danced that night on the sparkling waters that lay between the yacht and silent, dead asleep Yarmouth! The crew of the "Waterfay" appeared to be the only live mortals in creation—not a sight or sound but B——'s fine voice pealing out into night as the good ship won her way eastward.

Such a scene amply repaid the Innocents for their lost sleep, and in one memory at least will be forgotten to the end.

At four a.m. the voyage came to an end, the "Waterfay" was moored near Lacon's ale stores, and everyone turned into their berths happy, red-nosed, and gaping.

At ten a.m. everyone was awakened by something colliding with the "Waterfay," which something a peep from the side windows revealed to be a trading wherry. No damage but a friendly bump.

"Now then, for'rad there! Wake up! Lee, Josling, tumble up! Why, we've been asleep nearly two days. Get your kettle and stewpan started, and wake us in half an hour." This from Linear, who was admiral.

But everyone was now fully awake and lay chatting in their warm berths.

Burley, who is a most inordinate snorer, occupied the fore-cabin, and could hear the crew discussing the truth of having slept nearly two days.

Lee averred that all had no doubt overslept themselves, and gone right through a short eight-hours' daylight without knowing it, and had, as he put it, "landed inter the daay arter ter-morrer."

"What's ter daay, then?" asked Josling.

"How shud I know, fule," was Lee's tart reply.

"Well, I'll werry sune hear," quoth Josling, quietly sliding the hatch-cover off, and as quietly hailing the wherrymen in their little cabin a few yards off.

"Hist! Good mawnin', Bumble, will yer tell us what day 'tis? we ha' got a bit wrong in our rackonin'."

Bumble poked his head out over the cabin door, and with a twinkle in his eye, and half a slice of bread and butter in his mouth, replied:

"Well there, bor, that's a quest'n tu axt a man. Yew've bin asleep lately, I kin see. What daay? Why, Tharsder, tu be sure!"

Josling gave a grunt, and drawing himself into the hatchway again with extended eyes, addressed himself to Lee:

"There y'ar then, I told yer so, it's Tharsder, and Mr. Burley was right; we've knocked tew daays inter one and no mistake!"

"Thank goodness for small marcies," was Lee's remark, "we shall be paaid for a daay's wark done in our sleep!"

Both men firmly believed they had slept from Tuesday at four a.m. till Thursday at ten a.m., and no one upset their belief.

Two days were spent at Yarmouth, for Weedy and Stuggy had never been to Bloaterville previously, and enjoyed the Seaman's Museum, grand old St. Nicholas' Church, Trinity Wharf, and above all the Fish Quays and Market, though in January but little fishing is done in comparison to the spring and autumn fishing.

After the evening meal Lee asked leave to go ashore for a couple of hours, a request which was readily granted ; nine o'clock being the time appointed for his return, with the proviso that if he came aboard late or drunk, he was to look out for squalls. All were to be abed early so as to get away with the young flood very early in the morning.

Nine o'clock came, but no Lee.

Ten o'clock brought no sound of his lingering feet, and even eleven o'clock found him an absentee.

The broken parole annoyed Admiral Linear very much, and he prepared to give the truant a warm reception and a ducking to sober him when he did appear.

The "Waterfay" was not by any means a teetotal ship, but the bounds of moderation were never overstepped. Bears the four friends might call themselves, but not boozers. Cocoa is *the* thing for really cold weather ; it is at once food and drink, and there is only one thing that keeps out cold better, according to the writer's idea, and he has tried the whole gamut of drinks, and that is a cup of hot "Bovril." To a cold man it is fluid life, it revivifies his numbed being and flows through his system like new blood. Failing that

a packet of Knorr's Pea Soup will "make one's young blood tingle in his veins," and make him warm and comfortable.

At 11.30 each Innocent sat gaping and yawning at the other across the table, growling and snappy, as the previous night's rest had been an exceedingly short one.

L—— proposed that the others should roost, whilst he remained to welcome the erring one.

Carried nemine contradicente.

But a few minutes appeared to pass when L—— awoke with a shiver and a start.

It was broad daylight.

There lay Weedy with a happy smile on his countenance, while snores enough to wake a deaf man proceeding from the fore-cabin proclaimed that Burley was also in the land of dreams, although he had confidently whispered to L—— the previous night that he meant to just sit up and doze till that beggar Lee comes back.

The Admiral quietly pushed open the door and peeped into the fore-cabin, and beheld the dozing B—— propped up in a corner against a pile of pillows, and so well wrapped in blankets and rugs that he more resembled an Egyptian mummy than a fine specimen of the genus "landlubber" species "night-watch."

Linear sniggered, then laughed outright and awoke the fairylike B——, who sprang up as if the ship were on fire.

"What's up?" he cried in a dazed manner, as the

bright sun streamed into his dazzled eyes. "Oh, I know! oh yes, of course. Is the beggar back?"

Linear replied, "I don't know," and then shouted, "Josling!"

"Yes, sir."

"Lee!"

"Aye, aye, sir!" instantly replied the well-known voice.

Then Linear sat down in amazement, while the others rolled their heads out of their cosy blankets and inquired, "What's up?"

After breakfast Lee was called into the cabin and asked to explain his conduct of the previous evening.

"Well, sir, you see it wuz a little mistake o' mine, I mistook the clock, and instid of comin' away from my frinds at a corter ter nine, it wuz a corter ter ten; so, thinks I, it 'ont du to go aboard and distarb them gen'lemen, so away I go to old Hoppy Shelton's wherry, and he gan me a doss for the night, and then I come aboard at daylight. That's how it wuz, sir."

And he wiped his mouth with the back of his hand and looked around as if to say, "Very considerate of me, was it not?"

"Where is Hoppy?" asked L——, turning it in his mind to have Lee's statement corroborated, as it sounded too smooth and feasible to be true.

"Gone up to Norwich on the flood, sir," was Lee's ready reply.

L—— whispered to B——, "He's done us brown this

time, old man," and then aloud to Lee, he administered a caution, advising more punctuality next time, and a request that he should look twice at the clock before keeping a party of gentlemen awake till near midnight.

Lee resumed his duties with a merry little twinkle in his eye—a twinkle that caused L——, some months later on meeting "Hoppy," to ask him about Lee's adventure.

"Well, sir," said Hoppy with a roll in his black eye, and an accompanying roll of the bit of twist in his cheek, "it wuz like this. Me and Lee and some more chaps met together in the Jolly Oysterman, and o' course, as yow know, one glass bekon to another, and so on; and when half-arter ten come—shettin' up time, yer know—Jack Lee was so jolly full of liquor that his legs kinder shet up under him like a knife-blade.

"Well, he's such a fellow to sing when he's that way, that I dussen't let him come aboard your yacht in such a state; so I ups wi' his legs and Ben Peggs ups wi' his head, and we carried him aboard my wherry, and hulled him onter a pile o' sacks, and there he lay till morning.

"Jest at daybreak, about seven or so, I roused him up, and gan him some coffer and wittles, and made him woish, then sent him aboard the 'Waterfay' just afore I got under weigh at half-arter seven, and I think he go' out o' his scrape pretty well. Don't be hard on him, Mr. ——, for he's a good lad, and has signed the pledge since."

And it may be added he has kept it.

Up the Bure the old "Waterfay" rattled at her best, the wind blowing in icy blasts across the great marshes in a most cutting manner, so that one's eyes were constantly filled with tears, and the iron tiller had to be bumbled with a piece of sacking to make it a bit more comfortable to the hand, as without it the cold iron seemed to bite through even a thick glove.

It may be said with a great show of truth, that the ten miles between Yarmouth and Stokesby is the dreariest stretch of waterway in the United Kingdom.

It is one dreadful, monotonous, treeless, houseless, marshy flat, through which the river meanders, and over which, without stay or stint, the wintry wind whistles and blows keen enough to freeze the very marrow in a prize fat man's spine; that is when a north-easter is blowing, and the thermometer is dodging about the lower thirties.

Great frozen pools stood on the marshes, and curlew, teal, mallard, snipe, duck, waterhen, and coot were frequently seen, but mostly out of shot.

Each took it in turn to steer, while Lee attended to the stark frozen ropes, and Josling (who had been a boy cook at Greenwich) attended to the preparation of the ingredients for a mammoth Irish stew.

What dish finer for a cold day? What tastier? or more filling? What more comforting to a frozen mariner's stomach than a steaming hot jorum of Irish stew?

Had Homer been a mariner who sailed the wintry main, he might have added another stanza or two to his *Iliad*, in praise of fragrant Irish stew.

Speaking of stew reminds one of cooking, and then crops up the question so often put, what is the best cooking-stove for a yacht? What can beat one of Rippingille's (Albion Lamp Co.)? They will bake, boil, stew, steam, and do everything but talk.

The writer has tried many kinds of stove, but like many others has found Rippingille the yachtsman's greatest friend and vade mecum after all.

"Hand me thy dulcet lyre, O my impromptu Muse.
Thanks! Now for praise of Irish stew:

IRISH STEW.

- " " When Jupiter, with Court profane,
On Mount Olympus reigned,
On nectar and ambrosia he
His godlike state maintained.
His cooks, from every climate drawn,
Were famed for "bake and brew";
But in their menu was not found
The famous Irish Stew!
- " " When Hercules, his labours great,
He manfully did try on,
His strength was so prodigious that
He slew Numidia's lion.
And on his back he bore the world—
A feat that's not quite true;
And whence did all his strength arise?
From well-made "Irish Stew!"

‘ When Orpheus, Apollo’s son,
To Hades took his way,
To free his loved Eurydice
From Pluto’s dreadful sway,
Old Pluto gave the bard a dish
He’d cause for aye to rue;
He lost his bride by backward look—
He smelled that Irish Stew!’

“ Thanks, my lovely Muse, sling up thy tuneful instrument again, for methinks a jorum of the grateful dish awaits me.”

By the four-mile house, a party of men were smelting, and the “ Waterfays ” paused in their wild career to watch the hardy fishermen and ascertain what luck they had. Only moderate takes were being secured, and the handling of the half-frozen nets and ropes was paralyzing work.

The crew of four were invited into the “ Waterfay’s ” comfortable cabin, and each supplied with a stiff glass of grog, but one of them, before being served, tumbled off his seat like a log of wood, in a dead faint.

This curious collapse occasionally happens when men are too suddenly brought from a very low temperature into a high one, and the writer has been present on more than one occasion when such an occurrence has taken place.

Propped in the cockpit, and his face sponged with river water, he soon came to, but could not again be persuaded to enter the cabin.

Half a crown purchased a score and a half of beautiful smelts, and then under weigh again.

The wind was choppy and blew in big flaws, which gave the steersman plenty to do ; but as he was relieved every hour, it was not so bad after all. In the meantime, the friends played cards in the cosy cabin.

Weedy's turn came for the helm, and as he came from the warm cabin and took his trick at the wheel, with the wind howling through the standing rigging, and apparently focussing its energies on his starboard ear, and making his nose play the chameleon by changing it to fancy shades of red, purple, violet, and blue, he soliloquised to himself somewhat in this strain, sending out great spouts of white cloudy breath as he pushed the great tiler over, now to port and now to starboard, and anon steadying her.

"Well, this *is* deuced cold, and *no* mistake. Wonder what they are all doing at home? What a fool they *would* think me, could they peep and see me now with blue-cold nose, and watery eyes like Niagara in full run. Here comes a wherry ; I suppose I must keep to windward of her. What a smash it *would* be if I ran into her ; and wouldn't the water be something cold. Reckon I could swim ashore easy enough and run to the nearest village, but should sound like a peal of bells by the time I arrived, by reason of the icicles dangling from my clothing.

"There you blow then, young Topler !" this to the passing wherryman, who in return replies :

"There you go then, maaster ! Rare fine weather for a cruise, eh ? Body o' snow in them there clouds there,

you mark me, maaster!" And he points with his pipe-stem to the great grey banks rolling ahead, and glides silently onward.

Then Weedy resumes his soliloquy.

"I wonder what it really is like in the Arctic Regions?—perhaps not worse than a north-easter here. The Esquimos appear to get along all right. I wonder if a fellow could eat that big piece of raw suet hanging in the larder on a day like this? I believe I could. Wonderful thing is cold, to make one eat solid fat without revulsion. I could eat fat pork four inches thick with a biscuit now, I'm sure."

"I say, Lee, did you ever hear of a man eating candles in very cold weather?"

"Yes, sir, I once bet a man half a gallon one cold day that he couldn't eat a candle—that was out in the North Sea fishing a few year back, and it wuz cold tu."

"Well," queried W—— eagerly, pushing the tiller over to make a tack, "and how did he get through his task?"

"Oh! I done him, sir! He thou't he was goin' ter set about a 'taller' candle, but I gan him a 'compersite' to tackle, and he could only manage half; it kindler hung round his teeth and wouldn't go down, so he gan it up!"

Then W—— falls into reverie again.

"My feet are like two blocks of stone—by the way, straw in the cockpit would be an improvement if it were well-trodden down so as not to foul the jib-sheets.

Bother this nose of mine, I have to attend to it twenty times an hour at least. Now *really*, which is the better, to be snug at home in the arm-chair by the fireside of my study, with my feet on the fender, and a big cigar in my mouth, or here with frozen ears, nose, feet, and hands? I have no hesitation in preferring my present station in the well, let the wind cut and whistle as it will, as I guide my bark boldly northward with her great main-sail overhead set as stiff as a board, to the most comfortable fireside in the universe.

"In a few minutes I shall be relieved, and dive into the cabin and thaw my nose over a glass of hot, strong, and sweet, and with the feeling of an old Viking after he had accomplished some great feat of sailing the wintry sea.

"But I say what a deuced long hour this seems!

"If I am not relieved soon, I believe my feet will be frost-bitten.

"I must do a South Sea Island war-dance." (He does it.)

"Now let's try a whistle." (Tries, but his lips will not frame themselves to give out musical sounds.)

"Well then, I'll sing it." (He warbles the "Wreck of the Hesperus," and accompanies his singing by an elephantine war-dance, his breath going out in clouds in the icy air.)

He hears those three beggars in the cabin mirthfully cry "encore," and performs another breakdown for their edification.

Then, as he cannot get at his watch, he shouts to Burley to know how his hour is getting along. He fancies he hears accompanying giggles as the reply comes, "Another ten minutes yet."

"Jingo!" he remarks mentally, "it must seem so long because of the cold and the awful monotony of this flat, featureless country—nothing in the landscape to gauge time by."

Then those Innocents impose upon the good-natured steersman, and lengthen his ten minutes to nearly twenty, when he at last smells a rat, and threatens to run them ashore if one of them does not instantly turn out.

Another five minutes for Stuggy to put on his Arctic clothing, then frozen W—— tumbles into the cabin, and catching sight of the brass timepiece realises the little joke. He has been kept at the helm one hour and fifty minutes!

"Oh! you beauties," says he, shaking his fist at L—— and B—— "Oh! for a two-handed sword and block of wood, I'd serve you as Old King Hal served Buckingham."

"Never mind Buckingham, old man, get outside this, and receive our thanks for the noble manner in which you have steered us through this howling wilderness," and B—— held forth a glass of steaming whisky and water in his big fist. "Drink, my boy, and thaw your beautiful tomato-like but heroic nose. Drink Hael!"

Acle Bridge at last.

All hands ahoy!

Down comes jib and main-sail, and down comes mast, and all hands working with a will, the "Waterfay" is soon quanted under the inconvenient and narrow centre arch, and moored by the left bank for the night. Up goes the comfortable awning over the cockpit, and in half an hour everything is snug, and on comes the great dish of steaming Irish stew—a dish the gods never tasted, or it would have formed a standing dish among those immortals, "Boreas, Neptune, & Co."

Fancy such an item added to the menu of Ambrosiæ! That night all made merry.

Burley sang several songs, while the others formed a grand chorus.

Lee, being a famous step-dancer, hung a lamp in the stern-sheets and indulged the company with a number of jigs, reels, and hornpipes, for which the Innocents made the music by whistling, keeping time by clapping hands *à la* the West Indian negroes.

The well made a capital stage, being snugly covered in with the awning, while the swinging lamp sent Lee's shadow dancing on its canvas walls in extravagant antics. He danced till the perspiration ran down his cheeks; in fact till, as he put it, "he couldn't chuck his feet about no longer."

It would have looked a strange scene could anyone have peeped in upon the pandemonium. Two gentlemen whistling and clapping hands and knees, two others humming and clapping ditto, Josling playing a

melancholy obligato on a wheezy flageolet, and Lee all arms and legs, dancing in boots whose soles left little change out of an inch in thickness.

It was just grand, and put the Albert Hall concerts completely in the shade.

Next day a poor breeze took the "Waterfay" up the Thurne, and being a head wind but little progress was made; but this just suited B—— and S——, who took their guns on deck and had some very fair sport at the wild-fowl.

"Keep her just moving along," said the admiral to Lee. "The wind has changed a point in our favour for sailing, but we do not wish to take advantage of it. Just slacken the peak halliards and give the guns a chance."

Josling hung astern in the dinghy, and acted as retriever, and before Heigham Bridge was reached three brace of pigeons, a coot, and a pewit lay on the well lockers.

"Good gobble!" quoth B——, who was alderman of the party.

That night the Innocents lay near Kendall Dyke—locally called "Candle Deek"—and by nine o'clock next morning had bagged enough wild-fowl to send a few feathers to their town friends.

With a view to carrying out this arrangement the fowl were allotted into parcels and duly labelled, Linear volunteering to take them to Hickling village for sending per parcel post. Lee accompanied him to steer,

and all went well until Riches' Dyke was reached, where it was found that the ice, which in Kendall Dyke was confined to the sides and a few floating patches, formed a complete barrier, making progress almost impossible. Near the reed rands it was very solid, and held in place by the stems of the reeds, but in the channel had been broken by a wherry the day before and "re-soldered together" during the night.

Both took a pair of paddles and pulled might and main, but the broken ice piled up in front of the bow and impeded progress. Now and again Lee, who sat on the forward thwart, would rise and disperse the accumulation with his oarloom, which enabled a little further progress to be made.

Thus with immense toil and much puffing and blowing, and no little perspiration, the entrance to Hickling Broad was reached, but that proved the Ultima Thule, for strive as they would they stuck as fast as the Tower of Babel, and could not get another yard.

A mile away on the further side of the broad dim little dots could be seen moving about—these were people skating, but beyond all was murk and mystery.

The two mariners looked at each other as much as to say: "Here we are; what next?"

"Tu thick to pull agin," quoth Lee, examining a huge fragment, "and tu thin to walk upon. There's a fancy now. What shall we du, maaster? If we can du anything it will be to walk, but whatever we du du, let's du at once, while we are warm."

Linear looked at the treacherous ice, which was quite an inch and a half thick where they were, but probably two and a half inches thick on the more exposed part of the broad ; then he carefully laid the oars out over the bow of the boat, with their blades flat and close together on the ice, and contemplated trying his fourteen stone odd upon them, but bold Lee with great gallantry would not allow the venture.

"Hold on, maaster, yow're tu heavy ; let me try fust, I'm on'y a little faller alongside o' yu. Now then," and he poised himself on the gunnel while L—— held his hand.

"When she bend she bear, when she crack she break," said Lee, warily sidling along the oars, and in spite of an ominous crack when he reached the blades, was venturing one foot upon the ice itself, when there was another and louder crack, and he made a dash back to the boat, up the treacherous oars ; and although a very difficult feat, actually accomplished it, and fell into Linear's arms, upsetting him over a thwart, and both coming down with a crash enough to send the bottom of the boat out.

The ducks which Lee had slung over his back flew in all directions, some in the boat and some in the water.

Big bruises to both was the result, especially to L——, who had a lump on the back of his head so large that he could not pull his cap on again. Lee had a black eye and sundry odd bits of skin off his forehead.

"Well, maaster, that's a rumman, eh?" was his remark, as he picked himself up and felt himself all over. "My gosh! I niver saw stars like them afore! Are *yow* hurt, maaster?"

"Hurt? Am I killed you mean. Just look here, I've got a lump on my head like a prize pumpkin!"

Nothing remained but to gather up the scattered birds and pull back to the yacht, which was leisurely done, and the two men who had set out like heroes only an hour before, returned like a couple of wounded warriors, much to the amusement of the other members of the party, who swore that a fight had taken place, and Lee having got a black eye had retaliated with an oar in a soft spot on the admiral's cranium.

That afternoon the birds were sent from Potter Heigham. The next few days were spent in shooting, and fishing for pike on the Thurne, and on the Bure as far as Wroxham, and very fair sport was secured, in spite of the grumbling of the "bears," who always wanted something or other they could not just then get.

Stuggy, who was never so happy as when using his camera, had one day taken about two dozen plates of what he called "manners and customs of bears in their native wilds," and after sundown had made a dark room of the fore-cabin, in which he and W—— busied themselves in developing the plates, many of which came out with beautifully sharp definition owing to the wonderfully pure atmosphere in which they had been taken.

Then came the difficulty of how to wash so many plates thoroughly, but S—— was equal to the emergency, for taking a large brown “ped” (hamper), he, with the aid of an awl, passed twine through between the twigs in such a manner as to form a series of divisions for the glasses, so that they might not come in contact with each other.

B——, looking on, commended him for his cleverness, whereupon, his face beaming with conscious pride, S—— chortled:

“I have an idea for washing plates, my boy, that will lick creation—it is automatic, and costs nothing.”

His idea was to hang the basket over the stern of the yacht just sufficiently deep for the water to flow through it as the tide ran up or down, and so wash the plates thoroughly. Quite a conception of genuine genius.

He carried out his plan by suspending the hamper over the counter by a number of strands of twine, and thus the machine was left to swing from the stern all through night.

In the morning—a most awful morning by the way, snow and wind and freezing hard—the precious automatic washer was gone.

Tableau!

With chattering teeth and wind-tossed garments, everyone was groping around the yacht with oars and poles, prodding the muddy bottom to find the hamper, and blessing S—— and his camera; the “bears”

really did growl at having to turn out on such a morning.

Burley, whose soul did not soar to artistic work, appeared to enjoy the incident more than anyone else, as it gave him an opportunity of poking fun at poor Stuggy. He wanted to sell the patent of the wonderful automatic washer to A——, and riled the inventor so much that had B—— been a couple of sizes smaller there would probably have been war.

Of course the others, seeing Stuggy's monkey up, must inquire of each other the cost of patent rights, and what would really be a good name for a plate-washer, etc., etc.

Poor old S—— bore it for a long time, and then fairly exploded with wrath, finally diving into the cabin to get away from his tormentors.

During breakfast he was very glum, looking unutterable things, but his drooping spirits revived when S—— stated his belief that the hamper was not lost, but had only gone before—that is, had become detached from its patent moorings and floated away on the tide, and that with the kind permission of the celebrated inventor, all hands, after breakfast, should turn out and hunt along the banks for the treasure.

In due time Lee and Josling manned the boat, while the rest went along the bank—two up stream and two down—wobbling slowly along the adamantine, ankle-breaking footpath.

Search was made in every nook and bay; not a

place on either bank escaped the vigilance of the searchers, and after half an hour's search a shout from the boat announced that the missing patent automatic, costless plate-washer had been found in a reed rand on the other side of the river.

"Hurrah!" shouted everyone as the boat took the "ped" in tow and brought it back to the yacht.

Joy!

But only for a short time, for it was found that the wood which B—— had placed in the hamper had swollen and raised the contents above the water, and a solid lump of ice held the plates in its frigid grasp; it looked as if everyone must be spoiled, as they were covered with all kinds of arabesque and other fantastic devices engraved in ice by the deft hands of Jack Frost.

On arriving at the yacht, sober and solemn council was held, when it was decided to thaw the whole apparatus "en bloc" as it stood on the counter.

The liquefying was brought about very slowly, by adding a pint of hot water to each pailful of cold water used; and thus by degrees the ice was dissipated and the plates recovered; only five of them were spoiled out of the whole batch.

Thus Stuggy's automatic washer turned up trumps after all, and several of the plates found their way into the very admirable album of "Broadland Scenery" belonging to the Great Eastern Railway Company.

At Salhouse, one fine crisp morning, the four

comrades had a very fair turn among the pike, having several capital "knocks," which resulted in the landing of six fish, none of which were of any size, however, the largest being a trifle over seven pounds. Several others under three pounds were returned to the water.

Two fine runs were had with big fish, but in one case the tackle snapped, and in the other some sunken faggots made such desperate tangle of B——'s running tackle, that he had to lie flat down on the bank, and baring his arm to the shoulder, reach down and cut it away while the big fish plunged about in all directions, being frequently visible.

Unfortunately B——, in his eagerness to secure his prey, cut the line in the wrong place during one of his dives, and away went Mr. Pike with his flight of hooks, never more to be seen. Unfortunately Josling had the boat away at Wroxham to replenish the ship with bread, oil, and other commodities, or he might have gaffed or netted the big pike.

The fishing was so exciting that after a hot lunch all fell to again in the afternoon with rod and line, each standing about a hundred yards apart from his neighbour. In about an hour, during which W—— had landed the only fish—a little chap barely going three pounds—there came a frantic "Hi! Hi!!" from Burley, with a reiterated shout of "Landing-net! Landing-net, quick!"

Unfortunately W—— had it 300 yards away, but picking it up he ran as swiftly as his heavy clothing

would admit to his struggling companion, who was dancing along the bank evidently playing a very heavy fish.

His line spun off the reel at a tremendous rate as the mighty pike took it, hissing and cutting through the water almost to the opposite bank, forty yards away. To the right and to the left, up stream and down, sailed the pike, and then made a dash almost to B——'s feet, where it stopped dead, as if to have a think as to its next move; upon which B—— yelled again:

"The net! Why *don't* you bring that net? Come on! *quick! quick!*"

He reeled in his line, and probably pricked the fish again, just as W—— dashed up panting and breathless with the big landing-net.

That prick did it, for the pike momentarily showed himself at the surface, then made a tremendous dash for liberty towards the other bank, making the big reel fairly scream at the rate it revolved, and—then came a kink or a jamming in a ring—the top joint bent like a Cynthian bow and suddenly snapped. Next, crack went the second joint, which broke off just above the ferrule, leaving only the bottom joint in B——'s hands.

A second later the line broke, and the fish was free! Everyone was so dumfounded that for a time no one spoke—they were too full of surprise and disappointment to record their feelings in words, and simply made that unspellable clucking "tut tut" noise, which means

volumes—and turned slowly from the spot where the monster had last been seen.

Whether it weighed “tu stoon,” as Lee swore it did, will never be known, but on the principle of the *Ex pede Herculem*, only judging by the size of its head instead of its foot, it must have been well over three feet in length, and consequently one of the coveted twenty-pounders.

If it did not furnish food for the table it at least furnished food for reflection and conversation for the remainder of the day.

Thus departed another fine specimen of the famous “nearly caught” pike.

“Pike on the brain” now appeared to have affected the whole ship’s company, and Linear proposed they should sail as near to Barton Broad as the ice would permit, and there try fishing through holes cut in the ice—a game he had tried on several occasions previously, usually with success.

Up sail, and away went the “Waterfay” through the white and grey landscape—threading the black waters of the river, fringed with its yellow ice-bound reeds, until Irstead Church, standing in its solitary glory on the bank of the Ant, was nearly reached, when she could proceed no further. This was partly from lightly touching bottom, and from the ice which had drifted and caked in a kind of frozen wall right across the river, at a bend completely damming the stream.

“Here we are, maaster, right in the middle of the

river," remarked Lee, wiping the perspiration off his forehead, for he had been quanting manfully, "she 'ont go a fut farder; but nothin' kin come off the broad and nothing go on, so we 'ont be in anyone's way were we air."

So there the "Waterfay" was moored by long warps to the banks, where she remained for two or three days.

S—— and B——, both fond of the gun, had very good sport up and down the Ant. Josling pulling and they looking out for a shot; one taking the right and the other the left bank. From Ant mouth they went to Thurne mouth, and did not return till after dark, by which time they had ten and a half brace of various wild-fowl; and again "the larder sang with fatness," even after each had sent away a couple of brace to his friends, for not a day went by without three or four brace being added to the store. Several flights of geese came over, but always much too high for a shot.

While S—— and B—— looked after the "feathers," Linear and Weedy were equally busy with "fins."

Borrowing a clay spade and a small mattock from the cottage occupied by old Allen, they shouldered their tools, together with a basket of provisions, and repaired to a certain part, near the mouth of a deep water dyke, which flowed into the main water, and near the junction made two holes in the ice, some ten feet from the bank.

Cutting the holes was not accomplished without some exertion, as the ice was about four inches thick,

and had to be removed as quietly but quickly as possible.

As soon as the holes were cut, the two friends observed quite a number of small fry, and hoped soon to make the acquaintance of some larger ones.

They used short, stiff pike rods, but before they put them together threw in a whole pailful of ground-bait, which was a secret concoction of L——'s, but as it was found to work well it deserved to be patented with Stuggy's "Automatic Washer."

W—— tried hard to fathom the secret, but all he could discover was that L—— had the day before bargained with a farmer for a great lump of horseflesh, which had been sent aboard the yacht before anyone was awake in the morning.

Linear had seen the dead horse suspended from the branch of a tree near the stack-yard, hung there as food for the farmer's dogs. That then was the principal ingredient in the famous ground-bait.

Anyway, it was as Pat would say, "an illigint bait entoirely," and so it wuz.

The lines and rods were placed in order on the bank, and in half an hour the fishing began.

Hardly had W—— dropped in when bob went his float (they used floats, but they are not necessary); he struck, and in another instant up flopped a fine perch, like a jack-in-the-box, and commenced floundering on the bank.

"Cadders and Fulfers!" cried L—— excitedly,

"here's a start! A half pounder, and a first promise of more to follow!"

He was but little behind, for a minute after he exclaimed:

"What cheer, matey, look at this!"

Up came the own brother to W——'s fish and joined the other on the bank. Then, between them, in the space of less than an hour, they landed over thirty perch, and—then the fun suddenly slackened and stopped.

While L—— looked to the two rods W—— hollowed out the edge of the frozen bank with much labour, and filled the holes with some fodder from a neighbouring stack, and in these holes the anglers stood so as to keep their feet from freezing. When fishing was slow they laid down their rods and did a fandango-cum-bolerocum-hornpipe war-dance along the bank for a minute or two to restore animation. This quickly circulated the blood and set them all of a glow again.

By one o'clock they had caught a pailful of fish, mostly perch and rudd, and after mutual consultation agreed to cut two holes in the ice a hundred yards further up; this they did for the purpose of trying live-bait for pike.

The holes were roughly about two feet square, and the ice at that spot nearly five inches thick.

Having no other rods but those in use, W—— went to a hazel carr and cut a couple of sticks, to which they rigged lines as well as their stiff fingers would allow.

For bait small roach were used, and ordinary bottle corks served as floats.

The lines were fastened to the centre of the sticks, which were about four feet long, and the sticks then laid across the holes, a lot of slack line being carefully coiled on the ice near them.

L—— agreed to watch them while W—— ran back to look to the perch holes.

There was a fish on each line; one of them being a little one-pound pikelet, of which three had already been taken and returned. W—— quickly re-baited, and ran back to the pike holes which L—— was watching like a born Esquimo.

The corks bobbed out of sight continually, drawn by the struggling live-bait and the seaward current, and it was soon seen by both that the mode was a very poor one, as it was not easy to tell when a "run" occurred.

L—— proposed to let out a little more line, and at the same time remove the rods from their position across the holes, and lay them on the ice some five or six feet away, so that in the event of a run the stick would fly across the hole, where it could be grabbed by one or the other.

W—— thought the advice good, but was afraid the stick might possibly be dragged end on down the ice hole, even though the line was fastened to the centre. Once under the ice, rod, bait, and line would be irretrievably lost.

To obviate this L—— placed several other sticks lattice-wise over the holes, and with a kind of "Eureka" swagger, promised to keep a vigilant eye on them while W—— worked the perch holes.

The latter did very well, the two rods keeping him continually employed among the striped fish, but Linear seemed to have no luck at all, so after a while he visited his friend.

"Look there, old man!" exclaimed L—— excitedly, as a fine lot of wild duck came sailing over their heads within a beautiful distance for a shot. "Oh for a gun, eh?"

"It does seem tantalizing," replied W——, following the long line of outstretched necks with his eyes and mouth both "ajar," "but it's very certain we can't fish and shoot at the same time. And just look to your right, there's a flock of pewit for you, my boy, two hundred and fifty if there's——"

"Hullo! Hullo!" shouted L——, running with all his might, "look at your blessed portcullis arrangement flying about!"

W—— took one glance, and off he bounded too, for there was evidently something very like a pike at work.

W—— arrived at the hole first in spite of L——'s long legs, and seizing the stick quickly detached the line and scattered the wooden gridiron with his foot, and then for the next few minutes there was a fine game of give and take, as line was paid out from the coil or drawn in from the ice hole.

Linear was dancing around his companion excitedly, giving all kinds of advice, when he saw the other stick come to life and wriggle, presently rushing to the crossed sticks at a single leap.

Now they were indeed busy, and excitement was in their every action and look.

Neither had a landing-net—that was away at the perch holes, of course—so they had first to exhaust their captives and then draw them through the ice holes; indeed a landing-net would have been of very little use in such a circumscribed space.

L——'s little pike went three pounds and a bit, but W——'s was a fine fellow of eight pounds.

With very considerable success they continued the fun till past five o'clock, when they could see no longer; by that time they had secured no less than eleven pike, running from three pounds up to one of nine pounds six ounces, the whole take amounting to between fifty-seven and fifty-eight pounds, besides which they had some forty pounds of perch, rudd, and a few roach.

They returned to the yacht at six p.m. fairly staggering under their load of fish and impedimenta. The pike were carried on a hazel stick, from which they were suspended by strings passed through their gills.

They marched in happy and hungry as hunters, only a few minutes before S—— and B—— returned from their shooting expedition, and greeted each other with as much rapture as if they had not met for months; but then so much had happened in a few hours that

everyone was bursting to tell of his adventures; but it was agreed to postpone the recital of the said adventures till after dinner.

"How's your appetite, old fellow?" asked Linear.

"Hush!" was B——'s reply, "don't ask it so loudly; it makes me feel faint—it's nothing less than a roaring famine which consumes me. How do you feel—steaky?"

"Rather! They say nature abhors a vacuum, and just now she must hold me in utter abhorrence, for I feel that I am a huge vacuum from my cranium to the very soles of my feet. What say you on the subject, brother Weedy?"

"Well, I certainly feel empty, but do you remember Napoleon's aphorism on hunger? No! Well, he used to tell his men that it was no use considering they were hungry unless they could feel the back of their stomachs flap against the buckle of their waist-belts as they marched. I have no belt, but by Jove! sharp-set is no word for my feelings. How sayest thou, noble Linear?"

"How say I? Why, I could gnaw the very paint off the cabin doors, I am so ravenous. If dinner is not ready in ten minutes I mean to make my first attempt at cannibalism; so look out, ye fat ones!"

Dinner was ready at 6.30, and—they *did* eat. Then with pipes filled and a cheery fire glowing in the little stove, each related his adventures. W—— how he had had a "run" with a whopping pike which had broken his hazel rod and carried his line clean away.

B—— had slipped down an icy bank just as he was aiming at a snipe, and had rolled into a drift of snow five feet deep, and bang went his gun just as he got to the bottom, much to Stuggy's surprise, for the charge was in his direction.

L—— showed his forty perch, not one under half a pound, and S—— was in ecstasies at having shot a brace of golden plover as he laid on his back, having slipped on a frozen pool; even Josling had met with his share of adventure by going through some thin ice into two feet of water and one of mud, while trying to capture a wounded waterhen in a reed rand, and in returning to the yacht to change his icy bags, he had found two mallard frozen, by their feet, into the ice of a reed pool.

They had apparently gone to sleep on the ice, and as some water flowed in from some rising land it had frozen around their feet and thus imprisoned them.

Is life worth living?

Rather, when a party of friends can have such a day's sport as that enjoyed on February 4th, 188— by the Innocents.

Since the occasion mentioned above the writer has made, for a friend, a little machine which may fairly be called an Automatic Signaller, for ice fishing.

The hole through the ice being cut as neatly as possible, so as to avoid dangerous cracks and fissures, a little machine of the following description is placed before it.

A thick piece of board, about two feet long and ten inches wide, has two pieces of broom-handle a foot long driven upright into it, in holes made at either end of the board. These uprights have slots cut in them from the top about two inches downward, into which drops a length of quarter-inch iron rod, so as to form a top bar, such as one see's on football goal-posts.

Upon this rod a thick piece of wire is fastened, with one end turned into an eye for the line to be fastened to, and the other having a small lump of lead on it.

A small piece of red rag should be added to the weighted end to form a little pennant.

To use this contraption: fasten on the line, bait with a small line, roach or dace, and place it in the ice hole. The small piece of lead suffices to keep the little flag lying on the ice, but when a "run" occurs, the line is pulled, and up flies the flag, wobbling about as a kind of danger signal, till the bold Anglo-Esquimo rushes to play the pike, which from the absence of a rod escapes about twice in five runs. Beware of sawing the line on the edge of the ice—a break very soon occurs.

This mode of fishing, however, has many advantages: among others it can be indulged in when boat-fishing is out of the question, and as there is no rod to hold, it gives one an opportunity of being on the look-out for a wild duck or curlew.

Gradually the "Waterfay" made her way back to Acle, frequent halts being made for shooting and fishing; the former being the most successful enjoyment. One day a brace of beautiful birds were shot, near Woodbastwick, with very long tail feathers, which in Norfolk are "taboo," but they came such a beautiful shot that B—— dropped them with a right and left as they flew across the river. Strange birds, but often seen in London, hung in rows outside the poulterers' shops.

The last morning on the Bure was a memorable one, for when the Innocents arose at eight a.m. the snow was falling very thickly and silently, while the thermometer, hanging to a tack on the mast, read 24 degrees Fahrenheit.

After breakfast the snow ceased falling, and all hands turned out to clear it off the deck, a task which took some time, as the frozen snow clung to everything with which it came in contact. It caused great fun, however, and any spectator must have been amused to see great bearded men behaving like a lot of schoolboys just released for the day.

"How much snow is there here?" queried Burley, looking at the thick, white mantle which hid everything on deck from view, burying coils of rope, quants, rods, and gear of all kinds from sight.

"A boat full to the gunnel," said Stuggy.

"Yes, and topped up beside," chimed in L——.

"I'll bet either of you," resumed B——, running his

eye over the shining crystals, "that you cannot fill the boat level full with the snow you can collect from the yacht. Three cigars and drinks all round. Are you on?"

"Right," said L——, seizing a spade, "we will take your wager. Anything for fun."

All set to work with a will, and in an hour the boat was crammed full, and even heaped above the gunnels, and the wager was won by the trio. B—— did the looking on.

Then the boat had to be cleared; but this made a piecework job, by getting some boys to clear and clean her out for a few coppers, while the Innocents retired into the inn, there to refresh the inner man.

The young monkeys soon completed their task by hauling the boat out of the water and turning her over, with the aid of Josling and the jib-halliards.

To hoist the main-sail was quite a task, the sheaves being so frozen in the blocks that Lee had to scramble up with a kettle of hot water to thaw them.

The sail, which was wet when lowered, was frozen stiff, and as the folds were pulled out in hoisting they rattled, as Lee put it, "like old tea trays on Guy Fawkes' day."

Great dun-coloured snow clouds covered the whole sky, and the wind from the north-east (a fair wind to Yarmouth) blew in fitful gusts, captious and unkind; but the "Waterfay" bowled along bravely, till the clouds caught her up—clouds which all knew were filled with

great snow flakes, like flying half dollars, but which no one imagined to have a mighty, roaring wind tucked under their massive yellow-grey folds.

As the first flakes fell silently around, a sudden squall like a "Rodger" (whirlwind) caught the yacht; it was a mighty roaring blast, and made the mast bend again.

Linear was at the helm, Lee at the jib-sheets, and Josling handling the main-sheet; while the others were in the cabin cleaning guns, oiling boots, etc., when, without a moment's warning, the squall struck the yacht.

The veering wind caught the huge main-sail and knocked Linear clean off his legs, jamming him against the well coamings, and in falling he brought Lee down with him, and there they sprawled about the well amid the ropes ends and a heterogeneous lumber of oil-cans, potatoes, and a variety of stores, which burst from the side lockers and prevented either from regaining his feet.

At the same instant the main-sheet was torn through Josling's hands like a flash of lightning, cutting and burning his fingers in a shocking manner, and covering his hands with blood, for he was only holding the sheet instead of having a turn round the cleat, as he should have done.

The cabin stove lurched over, and a sudden avalanche of crockery and a miscellaneous collection of goods and chattels occurred: boots, guns, and bread flew in all directions, as there came a sudden heavy shock and a loud "boong!" as the "Waterfay" cut a couple of feet

into the river wall and snapped her thick iron-wire bobstay, splitting her jib from top to bottom.

Everything literally went "by the run."

For some minutes the dreadful wind roared through the rigging, and the snow came down in such masses as to completely blot out everything more than a few feet away.

The stove was first righted, Burley and Weedy picking the hot coals up with knives and plates; then all crowded into the cabin, crew as well, and let the tornado blow itself out, which it did in about twenty minutes. Josling's hands were attended to, being bound up in flour after being first cleansed in warm water, and rubbed with salad oil.

The bobstay was rather troublesome to straighten out and splice, but Lee, with help, made a very good job of it, and everything being put square, another start was made for Yarmouth after an hour's detention. The Innocents reached that port about four p.m. ravenously hungry, as biscuits and cheese were the only snap of anything available for eating since breakfast-time.

A comfortable meal was cooked while the packing up was taken in hand, and in due course consumed with the appetite and relish that only fresh air and good health can give. Then, bidding the crew farewell, hey! for Liverpool Street and smoky, noisy, dear old London.

That twelve-mile spin was the roughest the writer ever experienced in Broadland, the high wind chopping

about so that it seldom came from the desired quarter—the bends and reaches seemed to be in league with the wind against the good ship, and the several degrees of frost made the north-eastern cut and sting like a whip lash.

The mussel dredgers on Breydon caught the gale after it had finished with the “Waterfay,” and capsized two of their boats, from which two men and a lad were unfortunately drowned.

After all, the wintry cruise was an enjoyable one, and the little incidents, accidents, and dangers encountered (unpleasant at the time) served to make the cruise memorable; and now, looking back after many years, it brings to mind glad memories, and appears as a bright gem among the happy days that can return no more.

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